

Video the Perfectionist's Guide to Fantastic Video

Watchdog®

No. 6 / \$4.50
Jul / Aug 1991



SPECIAL **EXORCIST** ISSUE!

★ Excised Scenes!
★ Expanded Coverage!

★ Exclusive Interviews!
★ Explicit photos!

RARITIES • RETITLINGS • RESTORATIONS



Video Watchdog®

the Perfectionist's
Guide to
Fantastic Video

No. 6
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"The two heads had already blurred and blended; now two new semblances appeared and faded, one face where neither face began nor ended."

—Dante Alighieri, *THE INFERNO*
Canto XXV, 67-69 (c. 1307)
John Ciardi, translator

Contents

FEATURES

The Mysteries of Faith Misinformation & Missing Scenes in *THE EXORCIST* 32

Does the definitive version of the world's most popular horror film remain unreleased? *Mark Kermode* sorts through the divine and diabolical evidence—with exclusive (contradictory) commentary from director William Friedkin and writer-producer William Peter Blatty!

THE EXORCIST From the Subliminal to the Ridiculous 20

Tim Lucas and *Mark Kermode* expose and examine the subliminal cuts in Friedkin's film, explaining why they work and telling you how to locate these and other revelatory sights on tape and disc. With exclusive, illuminating insights by Friedkin and makeup artist Dick Smith!

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David F. Friedman's <i>A YOUTH IN BABYLON: CONFESSIONS OF A TRASH FILM KING</i> , reviewed by <i>Tim Lucas</i> .	

Cover: The "person inside of Regan"—Captain Howdy (Eileen Dietz)—as briefly glimpsed after the second head rotation in *THE EXORCIST*.

Inside: The invitation to enter Father Karras (Jason Miller) allows Regan MacNeil (Linda Blair) to escape the demon's clutches.

Back: Lee J. Cobb as Lieutenant Kinderman.

KENNEL

LUCAS BALBO experienced "The Spirit of Cincinnati" during his recent US tour. His NOSTALGIA Archive (78 Rue de la Folie-Régnauld, 75011 Paris, France) licenses rare stills to books and other publications.

JASON GRAY publishes the informative fanzine SUBTERRANEA (\$3.00 per issue/47 Thorncliffe Park Drive #609, Toronto Ontario M4H 1J5, Canada) with Dennis Capicik.

MARK KERMODE is writing the definitive study of William Peter Blatty's "Mysteries of Faith" Trilogy (THE EXORCIST, THE NINTH CONFIGURATION, and LEGION) on page and screen.

CRAIG LEDBETTER is the editor of the better-than-ever ETC: EUROPEAN TRASH CINEMA (\$10 for 4 issues/P.O. Box 5367, Kingwood TX 77325), now in its 2nd issue.

TIM LUCAS recently programmed and annotated a VIDEO WATCHDOG Film Festival, presented during the Mickery Foundation's "Touch TV Time" at De Melkweg in Amsterdam, as well as the video portion of the 1991 Cattolica (Italy) MystFest.

SIMONE ROMANO is no longer publishing his Italian fanzine BLOOD MANIA. He is now freelancing for VIDEO WATCHDOG, ETC, and BOOK OF THE DEAD.

ERIK SULEV is working with Long Shong Video's Canadian liaison to make Hong Kong tapes available to our readers in PAL and NTSC. For more information, send an International Reply Coupon to Erik at 46 Tweedrock Crescent, West Hill, Ontario M1E 4L5, Canada.

VW THANKS:

Steve Bissette, William Peter Blatty, Gian Piero Brunetta, Lorenzo Codelli, David Del Valle, Giorgio Donati, David Everitt, William Friedkin, Graf Haufen, Alexander Heine, Alan Jones, Bill Kelley, Charles Kilgore, GertJan Kuiper, Michael Lennick, Dave Marshall (Marshall Discount Video), Jim & Jane McCabe (Video Vault), Roberto Morrocchi, Radomir Perica, Stefano Piselli, Dick Smith, Steve Spatt, Sam Stetson, David Walker, Bret Wood and, of course, our contributors, correspondents, and informants!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

CBS/Fox Home Video (Jill Goldstein—Amy Alter Associates), Glittering Images (Stefano Piselli, Roberto Guidotti, & Federico de Zigno), Kino International Corporation (Bret Wood), MCA Home Video (Evan Fong), MGM/UA Home Video (Sharon Aretsky), Prism Entertainment (Riaya Aboul Ela), Prometheus Books (Lorraine Baranski), Republic Home Video (Sharon Aretsky), Warner Home Video (Don Keefer and Debbie Russes). **COVER DESIGN:** Radomir Perica, International Design Studio, Washington, D.C.

PHOTO SOURCES:

CBS/Fox (10a, 12, 51, 52), David Del Valle Collection (front cover, inside covers, 22-24, 27c-29, 32-39, 46-48, back cover), Glittering Images (5, 6), Alexander Heine (14 ©1977 Elite Film), Alan Jones Collection (17 ©1989 ADC), Mark Kermode Collection (44, 55), Kino International (9, 10b), MGM/UA/Turner Entertainment (4, 60, 62), NOSTALGIA Archive (11, 16, 18, 31), Prometheus Books (56, 57), Dick Smith (30, 40, 42, 43), Toho (59). All EXORCIST photos and screenplay excerpts ©1973 Warner Bros. Inc. and Hoya Productions Inc.

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THE WATCHDOG BARKS



WELCOME TO ISSUE 666
of VIDEO WATCHDOG—our
Special **EXORCIST** Issue.

On the list of Top Grossing Horror Films of All Time, **THE EXORCIST** (1973) is third, following **JAWS** (1975) and **GHOSTBUSTERS** (1984); respectively, a superb suspense actioner and a rather lame, albeit magnificently *sold* thrill-omedy. **THE EXORCIST**, on the other hand, is one of the very few horror films to attain immense commercial success without pulling any punches, and it's unlikely that it could be made the same way in today's climate. Indeed, today in Great Britain, the film remains unofficially banned and cannot be legally sold on video.

I first saw **THE EXORCIST** at a midnight screening in Springdale, Ohio, December 26, 1973. I was then editing and writing the film pages of a local entertainment paper, and descended on the theater with a small, buoyant group of co-workers. The film was already in progress—on the screen was the shot of the Iraqi boy racing to summon Father Merrin to an excavation site. The screen was bright with Middle Eastern sunlight, luminating the generous auditorium so that the specially invited audience could be seen taking advantage of the room by spreading out. It was a situation, believe me, that slowly changed during the next two hours to a condition of huddled togetherness that still wasn't quite enough. During an unnaturally silent ride home, a young woman in our company remembered something she had seen in the movie... and started screaming uncontrollably.

About ten hours later, **THE EXORCIST** was shown for the first time to paying audiences and that same sense of hysteria went nationwide. Rumors surfaced about a series of unexplained technical mishaps which occurred during production, from the death of co-star Jack MacGowran (two weeks after completing his role as director Burke Den-

nings), to the destruction of a set by fire, to the severing of a gaffer's toe. Almost twenty years later, these mystic reverberations continue. Mark Kermode's "overnight" mailing of his **EXORCIST** coverage took two weeks to arrive here from London and, though he's long since phoned it in, we're still waiting to receive its final page, which he sent us during an April visit to Los Angeles!

In this issue of VIDEO WATCHDOG, you will be taken as far as possible into the confidence of this unknowable classic, as Mark describes various scenes which did not survive director William Friedkin's final cut—much to the displeasure of writer-producer William Peter Blatty. Mark writes about **THE EXORCIST** like a man possessed (it's his *favorite* movie), and his *magnum opus* is complemented by exclusive commentary from the film's creative principals, and a separate article about the film's subliminal images which tells you how to find these and other buried secrets.

Both articles are illustrated with never-before-published stills from the David Del Valle Collection, and several others from the personal files of Oscar-winning makeup artist Dick Smith. The photos entrusted to us for this Special **EXORCIST** Issue were heaven-sent, and we were hell-bent on guiding as many of them into print as was humanly possible. Therefore, after much deliberation, we've decided to bump the third and final installment of "The Trouble with TITIAN" to our next issue. We apologize for the breach of continuity.

It is William Peter Blatty's hope that Warner Home Video will celebrate the 20th Anniversary of **THE EXORCIST**—obviously one of their most successful films ever—by restoring its original 140m cut (which he considers "the definitive version, a master-work") for release as a Special Edition laserdisc. VIDEO WATCHDOG shares this quixotic wish and, in the meantime, we offer this Special Issue as a way to while away the miles on the road to 1993.

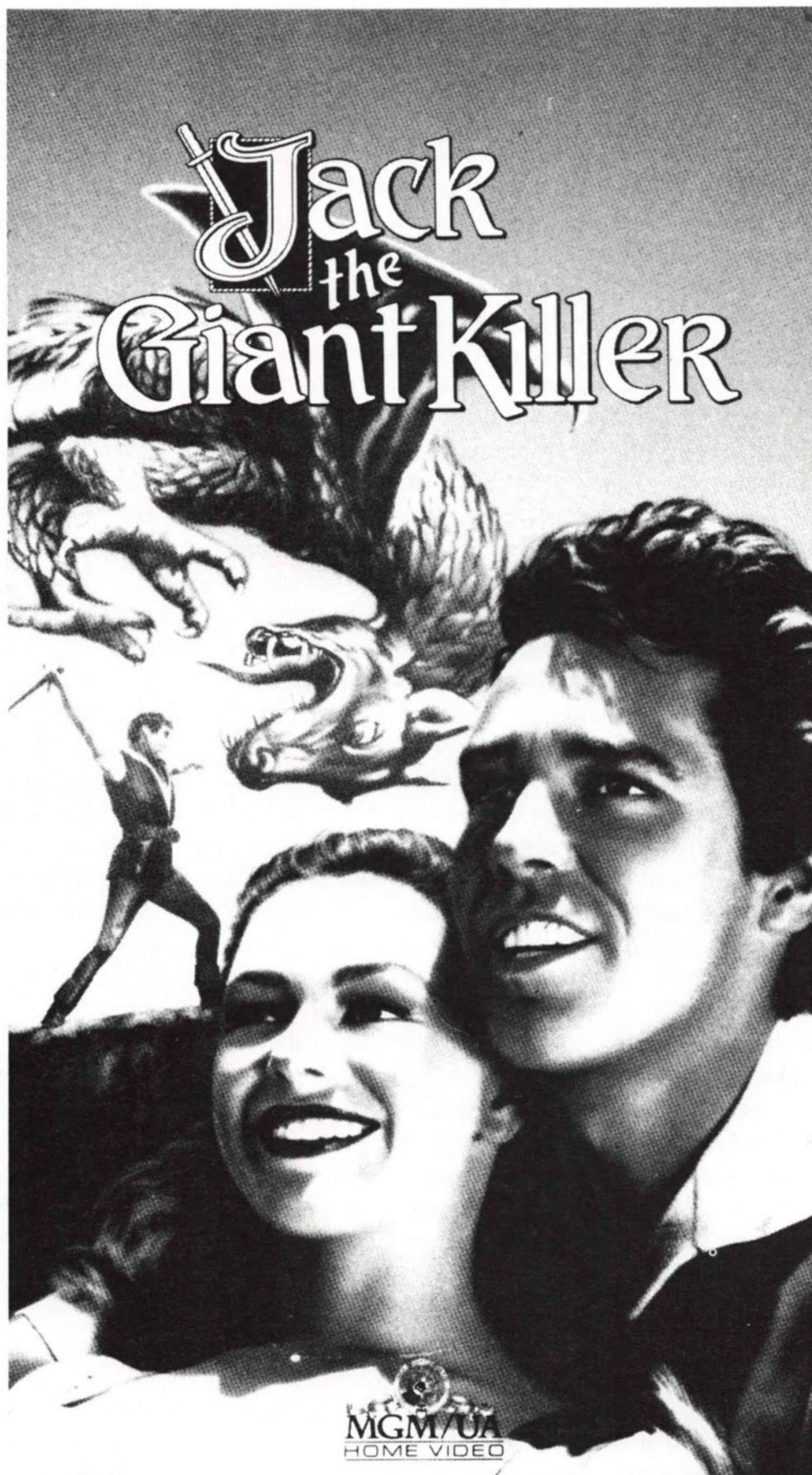
WATCHDOG NEWS

Jack is Back! Giant Killer Restored to Giant Thriller

Contrary to our "Video Around the World" announcement last issue, MGM/UA Home Video's new release of **JACK THE GIANT KILLER** (1962, \$19.95) presents this superb juvenile fantasy in its *original* form, *not* the abhorrent musical version which has replaced it in circulation since 1976.

A February MGM/UA press release announced that the Edward Small production was being released to video in its musical form. Because the original **JACK** has not been available for more than a decade, because the musical had recently surfaced on such cable networks as The Movie Channel and The Disney Channel, and because the MGM/UA video box itself propagates a false description of the tape's contents ("Complete with musical numbers..."), we saw no reason to doubt it.

Considering the misrepresentations on the box, we don't know whether MGM/UA is even aware that they've released the original version and, frankly, we were afraid to ask. Wise watchdogs will snap up their own personal copy of **JACK THE GIANT KILLER** without delay. Though compromised somewhat by the cropping of its original "Fantascope" framing, this tape marks one of the great restorations performed to date on home video.



Something Worth Singing About

A series of glorious, oversized (10½" x 13") paperback art books for adults, *DIVA* falls somewhere between a magazine, a book, a VW-style guide to missing scenes from films, and a witty palette of perversions. To date, *DIVA* has published nine volumes, of which they were kind enough to send us the two most pertinent: *CINEMA 1951-65* (published 4/89) and *SATANICA* (6/90). Text is presented in Italian, French, and English.

DIVA CINEMA 1951-65 is dedicated to what editors Stefano Piselli and Roberto Morrocchi call

"damned" films: in other words, gems of low-budget cinema that were plagued by censorship problems; films that may be awful but can be considered beautiful for the sensations of pleasure they evoke in the viewer. Ten films are discussed with delicious wit, and illustrated with rare stills, including nude shots from European "uncovered" versions. After each chapter, different artists illustrate 2-4 page fantasies based on the films in question which, more often than not, feature graphic sexual encounters with all the allure of long-lost, censored scenes. The films (and the artists obsessed with them) are: *REAR WINDOW* (Horacio Altuna), *THE SEVEN YEAR ITCH* (Ivo Milazzo), *LOVE IS*

MY PROFESSION (Alessandro Baldanzi), *HERCULES UNCHAINED* (Lucio Filippucci), *TOO HOT TO HANDLE* and *PEEPING TOM* (Giorgio Donati), *THE HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND* (Leone Frollo), *THE VAMPIRE AND THE BALLERINA* (Carlo Ambrosini), *La Dolce Vita* and *BLOODY PIT OF HORROR* (Massimo Rotundo).

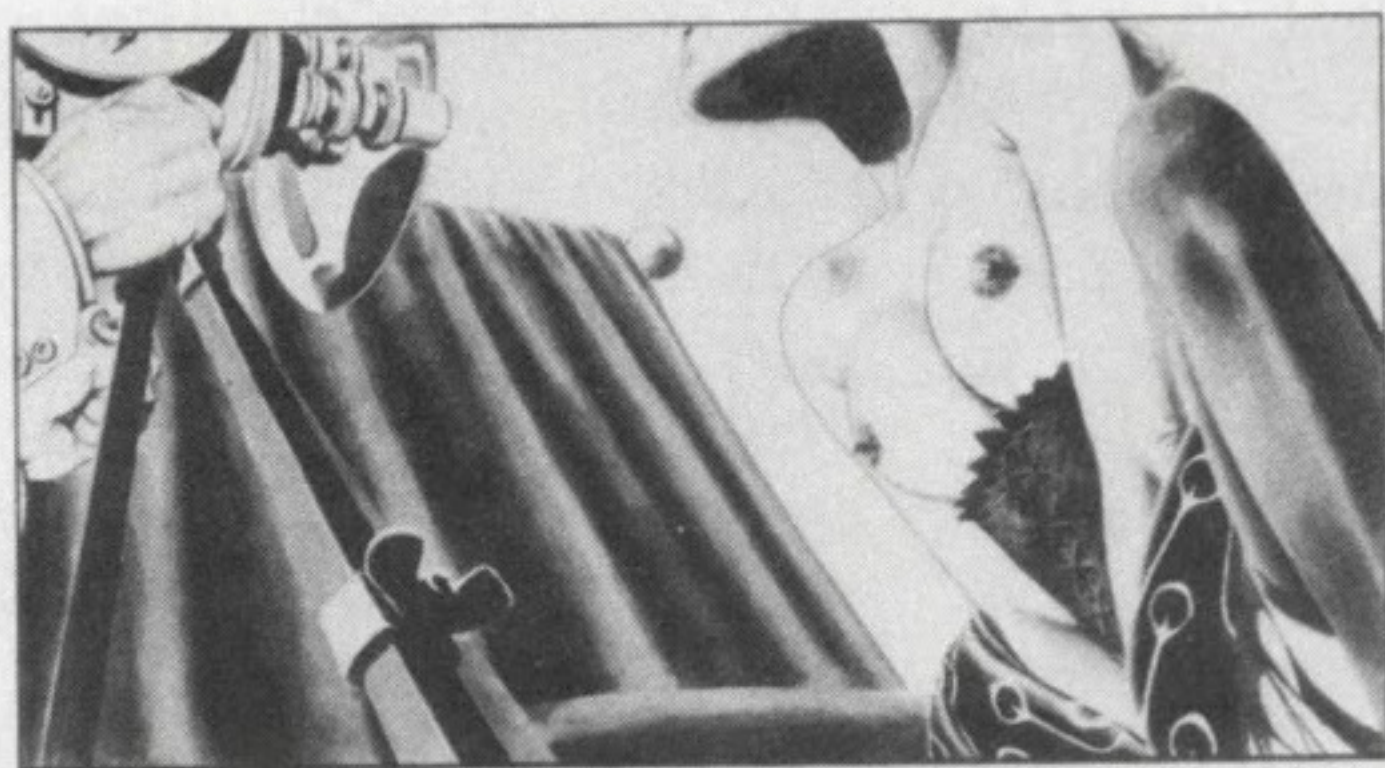
This volume is so extraordinary that a simple itinerary of the most interesting contents are all the salesmanship it requires. Particularly compelling is the book's chapter on Michael Powell's *PEEPING TOM* (1959), which includes rare photographs and valuable insights about the film's debt to English pornographer Harrison Marks, whose wife and favorite subject Pamela Green appears in a few scenes as herself. The chapter ponders whether or not the film's screenwriter Leo Marks was a relative of or pseudonym for Harrison, and presents several original Marks photos, far more revealing than any in the film. Equally valuable, perhaps, is the section devoted to that impossibly rare German film *THE HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND* [*Eln Toter Hing im Netz*, "A Corpse Hangs in the Web," 1959], which includes critical commentary from its original release, a number of revealing stills from the film's cat-fight sequence, and a particularly pornographic artist's tribute.

CINEMA 1951-65 is sustained throughout by critical commentary by French critics Ado Kyrou and Boris Vian. Here are a few samples:

"The victims of censorship constitute an elephant's graveyard, full of ivory that we must dig up in order to give the word 'cinema' its true meaning." (Kyrou)

"In the genre of erotic terror, the fantastic and the soft porn unite in the absence of scenery, sets, or *mis en scène*, and the





DAL BELLO/
RENDIMI FAMOSA!

ALLONG, MON
CHOU! RENDS-MOI
CELEBRE!

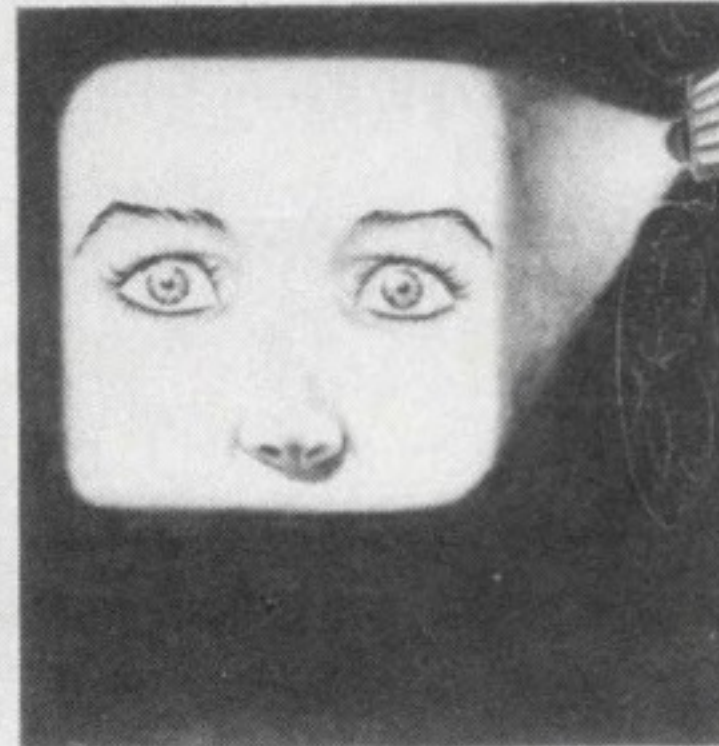
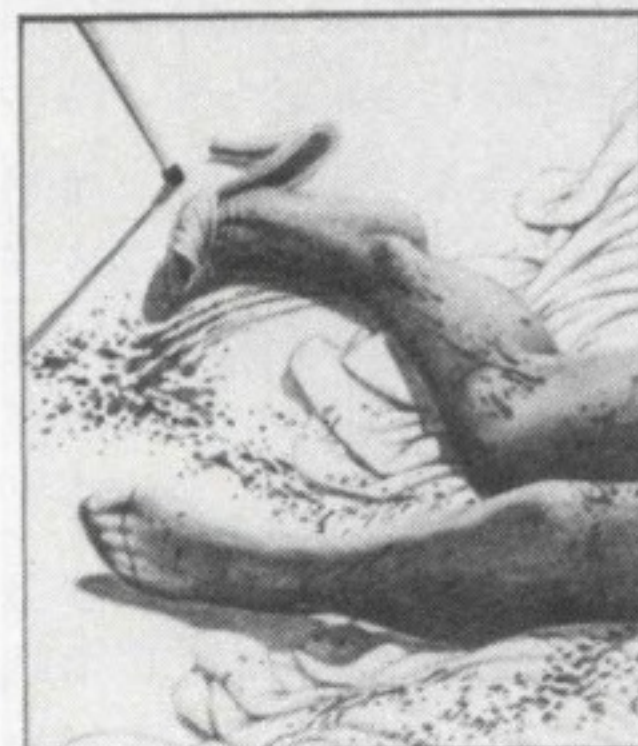
COME ON, HONEY!
MAKE ME FAMOUS!



MIA BELLA MILLY
...PIU' CHE FAMO-
SA! IMMORTALE!

MA CHÈRE MILLY...
PLUS QUE CÉLE-
BRE! IMMORTELLE!

I'LL MAKE YOU
MORE THAN FAMOUS,
MY DEAR MILLY...
I'LL MAKE YOU
IMMORTAL!



"PER LA PREZIOSA
COLLABORAZIONE
OFFERTAMI, ESPRI-
MO LA PIU' VIVA
RICONOSCENZA
A MARK LEWIS,
MIO FIGLIO!"

"POUR LA PRÉCIEU-
SE COLLABORATION
QUI M'A ÉTÉ OF-
FERTÉ, J'EXPRIME
MA PLUS VIVE
RICONNAISSANCE
À MARK LEWIS,
MON FILS."

"FOR HIS PRECIOUS
COLLABORATION,
I AM MOST GRATE-
FUL TO MY SON,
MARK LEWIS."

A.N. LEWIS, "FEAR AND
THE NERVOUS SYSTEM"

DIVA: Giorgio Donati pays homage to Powell's PEEPING TOM.

result is to leave us with unforgettable pictures. Involuntarily, **THE HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND** is a Dadaist film." (Kyrrou)

"The invention of true-to-life lighting is the last straw in modern cinema—a trash can filled with slogans." (Vian)

On the basis of such extracts, it's time that someone over here undertook translations of their wisdom.

The more recent **DIVA SATANICA** addresses the role of the Black Arts in history and popular entertainment, with chapters devoted to Pagan orgies, witchcraft, *femmes fatale*, vampires, and instruments of torture. Visually, as always, the volume is a delirious treat, a *mélange* of paintings, comic art, and still photography that rallies the likes of Jayne

Mansfield, Jess Franco, Frank Frazetta, Countess Erzébet Bathory, Howard Chaykin, Anton Le Vey, Tim Vigil, Alistair Crowley, Ken Russell, Gray Morrow, and Rosalba Neri to illustrate the writings of Riccardo Morrocchi, Federico de Zigno, and others.

Other titles in the **DIVA** series are **BLUE** (a survey of erotic films from Theda Bara to Walerian Borowczyk to Traci Lords), **PUTTANA** (a history of prostitution in the arts), and **AMOUR FOU** (devoted to obsessive love), as well as **THE IMAGE OF DESIRE**, **UN CERTAIN REGARD**, **BIZARRE**, and **MANIA**.

DIVA carries no price tag on its bindings, but sells for about \$35.00 per copy. Write to Glittering Images Edizioni D'Essai, Via Ardengo Soffici 11/13, 50142 Firenze ITALIA. Adults only.

Cryptic Krypton Notes

We recently caught up again with Fritz Lang's baroque western **RANCHO NOTORIOUS** (1952, available from United Home Video) and had to scratch our heads in wonderment over its range of influence, particularly where Emil Newman's score was concerned. For instance, as the opening theme plays over the main titles, the credit for actor George Reeves appears simultaneously with the song lyric "a souvenir for a bygone year/spinnin' a tale of the old frontier/and a *Man of Steel*..." (To compound the coincidence, Lloyd Gough ["Kinch"] later describes hero Arthur Kennedy's piercing stare to Reeves: "[He] looks straight through a man!") **THE ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN** was cast the following year; could a Hollywood casting agent have been subliminally influenced by these messages to hire Reeves for the title role, or is this just another eerie instance of History writing itself backwards? Equally mysterious is how the mandolins at Chuck-a-Luck (Marlene Dietrich's desert hideout) were able to play "Love Me Tender" upon Kennedy's arrival... four years before Elvis Presley and Vera Matson wrote it!

Retitlings

ALIEN WOMEN (New Pacific Pictures, \$9.95) is Michael Cort's **ZETA ONE**, also available from Sinister Cinema as **THE LOVE FACTOR** [see VW 4:10].

CASTLE OF DEATH (Premiere, \$9.95) is Jean Brismée's stylish and enjoyable **La Plus**



George Reeves and Phyllis Coates (our favorite Lois Lane) in *SUPERMAN AND THE MOLE MEN* (1950).

Longue Nuit du Diable ("The Endless Night of the Devil," 1971), available from Monterey Home Video under its US release title **THE DEVIL'S NIGHTMARE** (1971), and previously retitled **SUC-CUBUS** by Applause Video. Part of Premiere's "Facing All Death" series, this version is recorded in the EP mode and includes the sepia-toned prologue deleted from its release on Regal Video as **THE DEVIL WALKS AT MIDNIGHT**.

FORBIDDEN PASSIONS, which recently aired on the Viewer's Choice pay-per-view service, is Max Pecos' **Je Suis une Nymphomane** ("I Am a Nymphomaniac," 1970). Sandra Jullien stars as a frigid woman who, after suffering a fall through an open elevator shaft, regains consciousness in perpetual heat! Previously released in the U.S. as **LIBIDO** and **THE SENSUOUS TEEN-AGER**. Janine Reynaud and Michel Lemoine appear in slimy supporting roles.

GUN CRAZY (Simitar, \$9.95) uses the title of Joseph H. Lewis'

noir classic to conceal an LP-recorded copy of Richard Quine's **A TALENT FOR LOVING** (1969), based on a comic western novel by Richard Condon. Starring Richard Widmark, Topol, and Cesar Romero, it's about a gambling cowboy who marries into a wealthy Mexican family blighted with an ancient curse that makes its women sexually insatiable. Widmark's daughter is played by Caroline Munro (her screen debut), who met her ex-husband Judd Hamilton on this production. Taken from a scratchy 16mm print.

GUNFIRE (Bingo, \$59.95) is Monte Hellman's **CHINA 9 LIBERTY 37** (1978), starring Warren Oates and Jenny Agutter. Filmed in Italy, this intriguing western features Sam Peckinpah in a minor role.

THE MODEL KILLER (Regal, \$49.95) is Ray Dennis Steckler's **THE HOLLYWOOD STRANGLER MEETS THE SKID ROW SLASHER** (1979), a largely silent film directed under his "Wolfgang Schmidt"

façade. This version is reportedly 16m longer than the original title release on Active Video.

ROBO MAN (Ace Video, \$39.95) is Jack Gold's 1974 film **WHO?**, an Allied Artists melange of science-fiction and espionage starring Elliott Gould and Trevor Howard, in which an American scientist is artificially reconstructed by the Russians following a fatal accident to access his national secrets.

SAVAGE DAWN (Bingo, \$49.95) is **STRYKER** (1983), one of the most turgid attempts to capitalize on the success of **THE ROAD WARRIOR** and other motorized apocalypse *scenaria*. Directed by Cirio H. Santiago, of **VAMPIRE HOOKERS** notoriety.

SLASHER IN THE HOUSE (New Pacific, \$N/A) is Media Home Entertainment's **HOME SWEET HOME**, an unmemorable turkey in which Jake ("Body by Jake") Steinfeld celebrates Thanksgiving Day with some creative carving.

SWEET CANDY (Majestic, \$39.98) is **CANDY STRIPE NURSES** (1974), the fifth and final entry in New World Pictures' "Nurse" series. Directed by Allan Holleb, the film is mostly of interest for supporting roles by Dick Miller and film historian Stanley Ralph Ross (author of **THE MOTION PICTURE GUIDE**). Candice Rialson demonstrates her bedside manner, as does Robin Mattson (now a soap-star on NBC-TV's **SANTA BARBARA**).

[Thanks to S.E. Stetson of Alexandria, VA and John Thonen of Raytown, MO for additional information.]





Video Around the World

U.S.A.

Skyward, Westward and Edward

AELITA: THE QUEEN OF MARS

1924, Kino International, HF, \$29.95

Reportedly three years in the making and enlisting a crew of 3000 workers, this Soviet space-fantasy was the first true epic of the genre, though its telescopes are decidedly more focused on the human heart. N.M. Tseretelli plays Loss, a Moscow engineer whose marriage becomes troubled when the state demands that he and his wife accept a romantic meddler as a tenant. Loss's fall from grace is noted by Aelita, the Queen of Mars (Y. Solntseva), who communicates to him the necessary information to cross the heavens into her waiting arms. Director Yakov Protazonov's film was a key influence on the escapist space fare of the 1930's—particularly **JUST IMAGINE** (1933) and Universal's **FLASH GORDON** series—but cuts much deeper. The ambitious script, based on Alexei Tolstoi's novel, is full of mirrored charac-

ters, situational ironies (Mars is found in the midst of a proletariat uprising), and personal anguish. The Martian sequences occupy less screen time than you might expect; their garish, cubist surroundings suggesting the romantic abandon of Mars as well as the harsh familiarity lurking at the root of its greener grasses. The most impressive visual effect is the split-screen photography used for Tseretelli's dual role (as Loss and his Zarkov-like assistant) which, though sparingly used, is every bit as convincing as the work in **DEAD RINGERS**. An orchestral score was originally announced

KEY

CC	Closed Captioned
D	Digital
DS	Digital Stereo
HF	Hi-Fi
LB	Letterboxed
LD	Laserdisc
S	Stereo
SS-S	Surround Sound Stereo

Compiled by Lucas Balbo (France), Jason Gray (Canada), Craig Ledbetter (Venezuela), Simone Romano (Italy), Erik Sulev (Asian-American), and the Video Watchdog



Ihosha (A.F. Pergonets), the royal lady-in-waiting, poses with the Chief Astronomer in AELITA: THE QUEEN OF MARS (1924).

for this title, but the tape contains a sprightly, inventive piano score by Alex Rannie.

BURIED ALIVE

1990, MCA, HF/S, \$79.95

Jennifer Jason Leigh stars as a restless city girl stranded by marriage in the country, tempted by her drug-dealing doctor/lover (William Atherton) to poison wealthy husband Tim Matheson with the ovarian extract from an exotic fish. After she bungles the dose, Matheson rises from the grave to exact revenge against his would-be murderers. This Made for Cable feature, which originally aired on the USA Network, marks the directorial debut of Frank Darabont, the screenwriter behind several genre remakes and se-

quels of recent years (**NIGHTMARE 3**, **THE BLOB**, **THE FLY II**, etc). Darabont brings little garnish to this plain-jane platter, surprising one's expectations only by managing to extract an uninteresting performance from Leigh. Atherton overcomes some achingly inane dialogue to steal the film, sadly no great *coup*. Though made for TV, MCA's tape carries a PG-13 theatrical rating (which doesn't seem to be particularly deserved or, hence, particularly surprising).

CABIRIA

1914, Kino, HF, \$29.98

One of the truly majestic adventure films of the Silent Era, Giovanni Pastrone's epic follows Fulvius Axilla and his servant

Maciste (Bartolomeo Pagano) through battles, episodes of human sacrifice, natural disasters, and imprisonment as they search for Cabiria, a young girl separated from her parents during the Punic Wars. Their story is related with unusually lengthy and poetical intertitles by the fabled poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, which perform the pleasing service of taking the viewer under the skins of characters whom the technology of the day could view only from a distance. Ultimately, though, this is a feast for the eyes, from its meticulously hand-painted sets to its varied costumes to its extraordinary special effects. Posterity has retained little information about the craftsmen responsible for these contributions, but the spfx—which, in the volcano and



Johnny Depp and Alan Arkin host a neighborhood scis-kabob in EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (1990).

flaming armada scenes, incorporate "Schüfftan shots" 12 years before Eugen Schüfftan first employed them in **METROPOLIS** (1925)—may be the work of Eugenio Bava, father of the great Mario and cinematographer of the previous Italian historical epic **QUO VADIS?** (1912), who was a close personal friend of D'Annunzio. Required viewing for sword-and-sandal buffs, who will appreciate the variety of levels on which this first "Maciste" film intersects with important scenarios of later peplum history: Hannibal's trek across the Alps, the siege of

Syracuse, etc. Beautifully restored by Charles Affron, this crisp transfer is accompanied by Jacques Gauthier's performance of the rediscovered original score. Forthcoming on Image laserdisc.

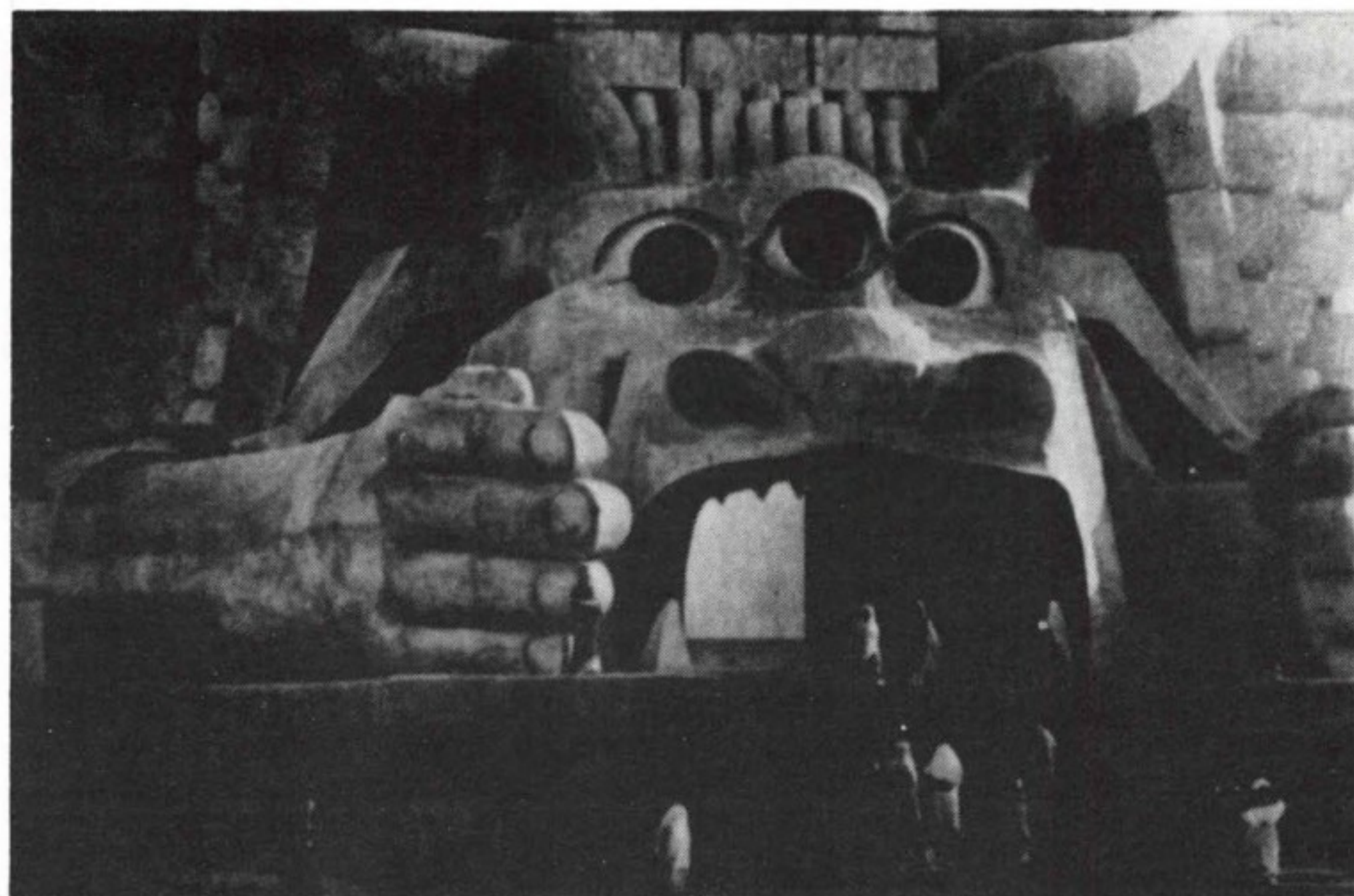
EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

1990, CBS/Fox, HF/S/CC, \$94.98

Tim Burton's most personal chronicle of the *outré* and the outcast is a snow-flecked fable about an orphaned, scissor-mitted automaton (Johnny Depp) and his adoption by a differently

strange suburban family, with an extended climax that runs the gamut from celebrity to persecution, from heartbreak to delinquency. Despite some breathtakingly gorgeous window-dressing, there's nothing appreciably new going on here (it's half **PINOCCHIO**, half **E.T.**) and the emotions underlying Caroline Thompson & Burton's story are aggravatingly vague. The fact that one can recognize in this film the arc of Burton's own career—from homemade projects with Vincent Price to rapid, disproportionate stardom and paranoia—makes it

Sacrifices to the god Moloch in Pastrone's definitive peplum, CABIRIA (1913).

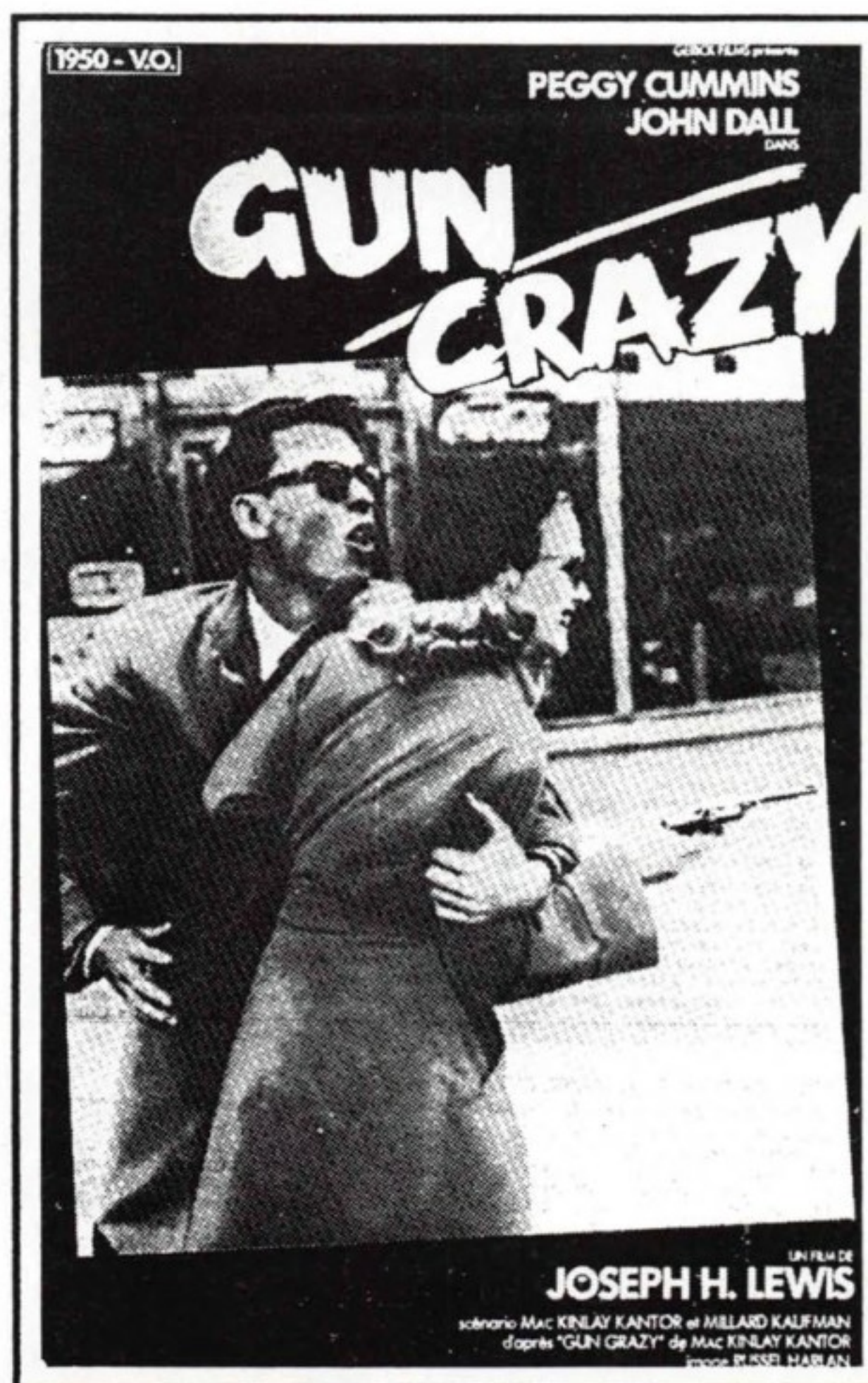


a more daring work of self-expression than he's attempted before. Apart from Dianne Wiest (who's good as gold in nearly everything she does), most of the film's women are uncomfortably etched, ugly and parodic; even Depp's romantic lead, Winona Ryder, is given no special affinity for Edward or, indeed, any special qualities to make her endearing. Price, however, is marvelous, reminding us of what a unique gift he's always been to the cinema; his daughter Victoria appears briefly as a pushy TV journalist. Ironically, CBS/Fox has packaged this plea for nondiscrimination in box art that airbrushes Edward's face free of facial scarring! The cassette we viewed featured unstable, fluctuating color, perhaps another Macrovision side-effect.

GUN CRAZY

1949, RCA/Columbia, \$19.95

Joseph H. Lewis' most famous film is beautifully preserved on video for the first time, as part of RCA/Columbia's "Gangsters!" sell-through collection. This bizarre love story of carnival sharpshooter Laurie Annie Starr (Peggy Cummins) and troubled gun enthusiast Bart Tare (John Dall) is so unabashedly fetishistic that it qualifies as a fantastic film out of the sheer extremity of its emotions. Introduced as a delinquent child (in a petty larceny scene acted by a young Russ Tamblyn), Bart stabilizes as he reaches maturity, until Laurie's vengeful nature douses his diminished passions with gasoline and tempts him into a trigger-happy life of crime. An extraordinary melange of hard-edged realism (note the justifiably famous one-shot robbery scene, photographed from the back seat of a moving car) and romantic delirium. Obviously, not to be missed.



IN THE COLD OF THE NIGHT

1990, Republic, HF/S, \$89.95

A Venice, CA-based fashion photographer (Jeff Lester) suffers from serial nightmares in which he sees himself murdering a strange, beautiful woman in a variety of ways. (Maybe it's that bright blue neon bed he sleeps in?) Anyway, when he meets his victim (Adrienne Sachs) in the flesh, they jump into an overheated relationship headed toward glaringly obvious horizons and hardly believable explanations. This latest convoluted nonsense from Greek director Nico Mastorakis (**THE WIND**, **BLIND DATE**) is agonizing to sit through, despite a couple of attempts at self-conscious humor. Mastorakis nominates himself to Hitchcock's fraternity of thriller-makers by presenting Tippi Hedren in a cameo as Sachs' mother (she's frightened by a bird); in a much funnier scene, Lester examines Sachs' video collection and

finds that she owns all of Mastorakis' films—on *laserdisc*! Even *this* one! And he *watches* them! Available in R (112m) and NC-17 (113m) versions; the padding is erotic in nature and, if there's one thing this already endless film doesn't need, it's padding of any kind. Only the R-rated version is available on laserdisc, for \$29.95.

POPCORN

1990, RCA/Columbia, HF/S, \$N/A

An impoverished college film society raises money by reopening the local Dreamland Theater for an all-night marathon of classic "gimmick" SF-Horror films from the '50s and '60s, unaware that a disfigured disciple of the late acid filmmaker Larian Gates plans the event for deadly revenge. Like a remake of **DEMONS** (by way of William Castle), the film includes amusing clips from such non-existent "classics" as **MOSQUITO!**, **ATTACK OF THE AMAZING ELECTRICAL MAN**



(starring Crispin's dad, Bruce Glover), and **THE STENCH**—but, where there is no affection, there can be no nostalgia, and the kids (led by Jill Schoelen, still playing teenagers) are from the wrong generation to venerate such stuff, anyway. It could have used a darker edge, more sincerity, and fewer continuity gaffes (one victim's taped mouth is shown untaped in closeup and, after a power blackout temporarily shuts the projection booth down, a reggae band entertains the audience—with *electric* instruments!). Beautifully photographed in Jamaica and Toronto by Ronnie Taylor (**OPERA**), this film was to have marked the directorial debut of Alan Ormsby, who broke into the genre designing the ad campaign for Europix's "Orgy of the Living Dead" drive-in triple-feature in the late '60s; wrote, acted and provided makeup for such Bob Clark films as **CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS** (1971) and **DERANGED** (1974); and authored/illustrated **MOVIE MONSTERS** (Scholastic Book Services, 1975). Ormsby's original screenplay, reminiscent of **CHILDREN**, is credited with veiled sarcasm to "Mike Hackett;" his children Ethan and Adam appear in cameo roles under their own names. The killer's name is Toby D'Amato!

PREDATOR 2

1990, CBS/Fox, HF/SS-S, \$92.98

Loud, violent, foul-mouthed sequel to John McTiernen's 1987 surprise hit is set in 1997 Los

A shot from PREDATOR 2 (1990)... inspired by the front cover of Dark Horse Comics' PREDATOR #1!

Angeles, when the titular alien is drawn by escalating gang wars to more ambitious prey. When it adds the head of policeman Rubén Blades to its trophy room, hotheaded partner Danny Glover takes it personally and initiates his own hunt, inadvertently crashing a government investigation of the visitation by covert supervisor Gary Busey. Though well-made and buffed to a high polish, the film is all sensation and no feeling; we never feel Blades' loss or co-habit Glover's anger and outrage, and are essentially asked to sit back, glaze our eyes, and enjoy the ride. The visual and makeup effects, as before, are exceptional and visionary; the dialogue, on the other hand, seldom climbs out of the primordial muck of "Shit happens" and "Hey, Pussy Face." The script, incidentally, is credited to Jim & John Thomas (the creators of this series), but evidence suggests that the real work was gleaned from the Dark Horse Comics series written by Mark Verheiden. Eagle-eyed viewers will notice in the Predator's trophy room a visual reference to a point at which this series may someday coincide with Fox's **ALIENS** series, as has already happened in the comics. Directed by Stephen Hopkins (**NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD**), and featuring a guest appearance by Morton Downey, Jr.

THE SHRIEKING

1973, Prism Entertainment, HF, \$79.95 (VHS), \$29.95 (Beta)

This retitled release—previously released by Intermedia Video [VW 2:11] under its original title **HEX**—warrants some clarification. The first half of this willfully anachronistic movie is a flavorful, humorous, turn-of-the-century portrait of a group of teenage eccentrics heading for California on

antique motorcycles, who are offered shelter en route at the farm of two orphaned halfbreed sisters. This **ZACHARIAH**-like plot veers into horror twice and only briefly, as Indian magic is vengefully directed against the most offensive guests; the rest of the film concerns itself with back-to-the-land ethics, rollicking bike rides, and reefer gladness. Supremely well-cast, in retrospect: Keith Caradine, Scott Glenn, Gary Busey, Dan Haggerty, and Tina Herazo (later "Christina Raines"). Though set in Nevada, the film was shot on location on a Cheyenne River Sioux Indian reservation in South Dakota. Vernon Zimmerman (**FADE TO BLACK**) contributed to the original story, which ends with an amusing speculation of how evil found its way to Hollywood.

Asian-American

This section spotlights an admittedly meager portion of the films featuring Hong Kong superstar Yuen Biao. Yuen is best-known for his collaborations with Jackie Chan and Sammo Hung; together, they are affectionately known as "The Three Brothers." The trio have studied martial arts together since childhood, and their careers in film often benefit from this long-term relationship. Yuen occasionally stars in films without his brethren, and his best performances happen when he portrays characters who are obsessed, stubborn, or more than a little crazy. This sparkling personality has more than 30 movies to his credit, and the following titles are offered as a recommended starting point for Watchdogs wishing to familiarize themselves with the work of Yuen Biao.

DRAGONS FOREVER

1988, *Rainbow Video (VHS)*, *Golden Harvest (LD)*, \$N/A

What would a list of Yuen Biao titles be, without at least one Jackie Chan film? JC stars as an amoral lawyer, director Samo Hung is a petty criminal, and Yuen is just plain crazy! The pacing is frantic as "The Three Brothers" battle nasty villains and also each other, in time-honored Three Stoogian style. Eye-popping martial arts and eye-gouging slapstick are prominent, but Chan and Hung also pursue romance while third-wheel Yuen wrestles with his sanity. No bloody messes or gooey ghosts, but you'll love it anyway. The tape is subtitled, but not letterboxed. Locate the Japanese laserdiscs if you want the amazing letterboxed transfers of Chan's films which, however, lack subtitles.

EASTERN CONDORS

1986, *Rainbow Video*, \$N/A

Director Samo Hung spices a somewhat routine "return to Vietnam" scenario with random surprises, heavy doses of violence, and piquant performances by Yuen Biao, Hung and the gorgeous-but-deadly Joyce Godenzi. Yuen is a motorcycling black marketer who hooks up with Samo's Chinese-American forces to recover stolen US missiles. The two leads especially shine during an ultra-violent, climactic kung-fu battle inside the hidden missile base. Vietnamese resistance fighter Godenzi acts beyond the call of duty by thrusting bayonets up rear ends, and continuing to slap her opponents around after losing a hand! On the copy viewed, the subtitles tended to slip below the screen.

THE ICEMAN COMETH

1989, *Rainbow Video (VHS)*, *Golden Harvest (LD)*, *Vidi (Mandarin)*, \$N/A

Over two hours in length, this film—more than a little inspired by Fred Schepisi's **ICEMAN** (1984)—marked Yuen's triumphant return to fantasy after an extended detour through the action market. In medieval China, a royal swordsman and his arch-enemy are swallowed-up by a glacier during hand-to-hand battle, and entombed in ice until a group of scientists release them into the world of 1989. The two men respond to the modern world quite differently: the swordsman becomes the confused servant of a conniving prostitute, while his adversary uses his weaponry skills to become a Hong Kong crimelord! The heroic Yuen must stop the villain's plan to return to his own time with modernistic weapons to enslave ancient kingdoms. Great fighting and special effects abound, with the warlord's time machine—a gigantic wheel of Buddha—particularly stunning. The Mandarin tape is beautifully subtitled and letterboxed; the other formats lack these features.

MILLIONAIRE'S EXPRESS

1984, *Rainbow Video*, \$N/A

An upbeat companion piece to **EASTERN CONDORS**, this "Express" hurtles along at breakneck speed. Best described as a Western set in 1920's mainland China, this film (also directed by Samo Hung) is a wonderful amalgam of train robbers, samurai warriors, spies, prostitutes, philandering husbands, obese wives and, yes, firefighters! The fighting and stunts are absolutely incredible. As a crusading fireman with a badge, Yuen performs stunts that no sane person would consider unless they were offered a moun-

tain of money. This subtitled film was shot in Canada.

RIGHTING WRONGS

1986, *Rainbow Video (VHS)*, *Golden Harvest (LD)*, \$N/A

Yuen stars as a vengeance-obsessed lawyer, hunting down the men responsible for his mentor's death, in this violent, downbeat, vigilante actioner. American kung-fu beauty Cynthia Rothrock co-stars as a cop on Yuen's trail, which is predictably fraught with unpredictably wicked fights, rapid-fire editing, and some outrageously bloody butchery. Great fun, despite the disc's lack of subtitles; the Rainbow tape should have them.

THE SAGA OF THE PHOENIX

1989, *Long Shong & Rainbow Video*, \$N/A

In this very disappointing sequel to **THE PEACOCK KING** [VW 4:20-21], Yuen reprises his role as Peacock, the supernatural hip monk, but has precious little to do as he spends most of the film frozen in ice. The rest of the cast lacks sufficient charm to carry the picture and, without Yuen's charismatic edge, the plot panders to the "cutesy" crowd in the worst way, leaning heavily on the misadventures of a "lovable" imp until Yuen thaws out to save Hell Virgin and the world from everlasting darkness. Cropped from the original widescreen ratio and subtitled.

ZU, THE WARRIORS FROM MAGIC MOUNTAIN

1982, *Rainbow Video*, \$N/A

An extraordinary early effort by director Tsui Hark—following his brilliant **BUTTERFLY MURDERS** and the warped **WE ARE GOING TO EAT YOU**—this is nonstop



AVIS
FILM
**FRAUEN IM
LIEBESLAGER**

*"What a nightmare!
I dreamed I was starring
in LOVE CAMP (1977)!"*

action-fantasy. Yuen is an 18th Century footsoldier separated from his platoon during a fierce (and funny) battle with several other armies, who meets a mystical magician and becomes embroiled in an agenda to save the world from the forces of supernatural evil. Hark throws so many surprises into the film that, during the lunatic second half, one starts to lose track of exactly what is going on! With enough sorcerers and martial arts to please anyone, plus Sammo Hung and Hark himself in cameo roles. Subtitled, but painfully lacking the letterboxing these crowded compositions need.

Canada

DEMONIA

Winner Video

This is a retitled, French-language edition of Joe D'Amato's *La notte erotichi della morte viventi* ("The Erotic Nights of the Living Dead") contains the original Italian main title credits and

runs 79m. Unfortunately, the tape suffers from a murky transfer, making some of the darker night scenes unwatchable.

LOVE CAMP

CIC Video

Don't confuse this Jess Franco women-in-prison item—filmed under the title *Frauen im Liebeslager* ("Women in the Love Camp," 1977)—with the Greek film of the same title (made the same year!) circulating on Active Video, which stars Laura Gemser and Gabriele Tinti. This film stars Wolfgang Wohlfahrt (as a guitar-strumming warden), Nanda van Bergen and Monica Swinn.

TERREUR EXPRESS

("Terror Express")

Videogram

A rarely-seen Ferdinando Baldi thriller about a group of thrill-seekers harassing passengers on a train. Dubbed into French, this Italo-German-Spanish co-production stars Werner Pochath, Silvia Dionisio, and

Carlo DeMejo.

L'ULTIMO TRENO DELLA NOTTE

("Last Train of the Night")

Cinéhollywood, \$24.95

This is the original Italian language version of Aldo Lado's *THE NIGHT TRAIN MURDERS*, starring Enrico Maria Salerno, Flavio Bucci, and Macha Meril. Ennio Morricone contributes one of his best obscure scores.

France

LE CAUCHEMAR DE DRACULA

("The Nightmare of Dracula")

Warner, 199F

Warner-France has recently reissued all of the Hammer "Dracula" films on video, taken from their original French-dubbed prints. This version of *HORROR OF DRACULA* (1958) is the most complete currently available, and includes such legendary, seldom-



seen highlights as Van Helsing's gory stakings of the vampire brides and Dracula's full decomposition!

LA CLINIQUE DES HORREURS

("The Clinic of Horrors")
Initial, 99F

This is Fernando di Leo's *La Bestia uccide a sangue freddo* ["The Beast Kills in Cold Blood," 1971], available in the States as MPI Video's **SLAUGHTER HOTEL** (the onscreen title is **COLD-BLOODED BEAST**) and on another label as **ASYLUM EROTICA**. This film about a killer stalking a European sanatorium stars Klaus Kinski, Margaret Lee, and Rosalba Neri (aka "Sara Bay") was theatrically released in Belgium as *Les Poupées Sanglantes du Docteur X* ("The Bloody Dolls of Dr. X"). Previously released by VIP Video under this title, and later by

Farah Film Video as *Les Insatiables Poupées érotiques du Dr. Hichcock* ("The Insatiable Sex Dolls of Dr. Hichcock")! This is the hardcore version with Neri's lengthy masturbation scene and several lesbian encounters.

LE CORBEAU MAUDIT

("The Cursed Raven")
RCA Video, 99F

Apart from being cursed, this is Roger Corman's **THE RAVEN** (1963) with an interesting distinction. The tape box carries the American running time (86m), despite the fact that the SECAM system (25 f.p.s. instead of NTSC's 24) should shave 2-5 minutes off these numbers. Does this tape include restored footage? Not at all; the film (badly panscanned, as are all available versions of the AIP Poe series) was duplicated at a slower speed—soundtrack included!

Italy

BEL AMI

("Beautiful Friend")
Playtime

This is a retitling of Pierre Chevalier's *La Maison Tellier* ("The House of Tellier," 1983), a minor softcore item starring Arlette Didier and Francesste Maillo. Chevalier—sometimes mistaken as a pseudonym for Jess Franco because of his work on **THE INVISIBLE DEAD** [*Orloff et l'Homme Invisible*, "Orloff & the Invisible Man," 1970]—is a real director. Priced for sell-through.

LA CALDA BESTIA DI SPILBERG

("The Hot Bitch of Spielberg")
Mitel/Capitol

This is Julio Perez Tabernero's *Helga la Louve de Spilberg* ("Helga, the She-Wolf of Spilberg," 1976), an amusing take-off on the Canadian/American **ILSA** series, starring Malisa Longo. A beautiful, albeit "crop-boxed" transfer, approximately 93m. The Mitel/Capitol label no longer exists, but the film can be found for rent or sale in many Italian stores. Venezuelan cassettes have surfaced in Miami of **THE SHE-WOLF OF SPILBERG**, in English with Spanish subtitles.

DELITTO ALLA MODA

("Crime of Fashion")
Stardust

A retitling of Claude Mulot's *Le Couteau sous le Gorge* ("A Knife at the Throat," 1987), an French *giallo* ("jaune"?), starring Florence Guerin and Brigitte Lahaie. Mulot was the director of **THE BLOOD ROSE** [*La Rose*



*Madeleine Potter helps Dario Argento pay homage to Bava's **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** in **TWO EVIL EYES** (1989).*

Ecorchee, "The Scorched Rose," 1967], which Allied Artists released in the US in 1970 as "the first sex/horror film!"

DUE OCCHI DIABOLICI

("Two Evil Eyes")

DeLaurentiis Video

This is the Italian-language version of George A. Romero & Dario Argento's **TWO EVIL EYES** (1989), a pair of hour-long Poe adaptations—an English version of which has yet to officially surface in America. Romero's "**The Case of Mr. Valdemar**" segment is an uncharacteristically tired rumination on his usual living dead themes (the opening shot quotes his original **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**), but Argento's relentlessly dark retelling of "**The Black Cat**" is a return to the more so-

berly audacious form he displayed in films like **FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET** and **DEEP RED**, capped by a riveting Harvey Keitel performance. It's too true to its source material to be the commercial picture Argento hoped for; it owes as much to Edvard Munch's **THE SCREAM** as it does to Poe. Uncut, 1:85 matted.

LA MORTE HA SORRISO ALL'ASSASSINO

("Death Smiles on the Murderer")
Avofilm

A complete 84m version of the 1966 debut feature of cinematographer/director Aristide Massaccesi, who later adopted the professional name Joe D'Amato. It was released in the States directly to TV in an Avco Embassy package under the title **DEATH SMILES ON**

THE MURDERER, in an incomprehensible 78m condensation. In its original form, it's quite good and achieves an oneiric sensuality which D'Amato never quite managed (or tried to) again. Also available on NTSC Italian-language cassettes in the United States and Canada.

PANTHER SQUAD

Domovideo

A Eurociné actioner with an extraordinary cast: Sybill Danning, Jack Taylor, Karin Schubert (taking some time off between hardcore films), Donald O'Brian... whew! Pierre Chevalier directed this film under the pseudonym "Peter Knight," and the tape is packaged to resemble a Bronson or Norris film. The image is cropped from 2.35 to 1.33.

A French
advertisement for
THE WILD EYE
(1967).



TRENO INFERNALE

("Hell Train")
Antoniana

This release of Alain Payet's *Train Special pour les SS* ("Special Train for the SS," 1974) is probably identical to the American **HELL TRAIN** (formerly on Wizard Video). Originally released in Italy as *SS Il treno dell'amore* ("SS Love Train"), the film has been cropped to 1.33 for video, and differs slightly from the German and Finnish video editions. Monika Swinn and Frank Braña star in the 86m film.

Venezuela

AENIGMA

Jared Martin stars as a womanizing college professor who seduces the wrong student in Lucio Fulci's 1987 variation on

DePalma's **CARRIE** (with a dash of the Australian film **PATRICK** thrown in). He's just one in a host of unsympathetic characters that doom this talky, actionless, telepathetic film to obscurity. Another mis-step in Fulci's post-*L'Aldila* career, though it earns special credit for showcasing the strangest and slowest animal attack sequence ever—*death by snail sucking!*

DEVIATION

This 1971 rarity—never before mentioned in print—is evidently José Larraz' second feature, a Swedish/Italian/British co-production, filmed in London back-to-back with **WHIRLPOOL** (1969) and directed under the pseudonym J.R. Larrath. Karl Lanchbury and Sibyla Grey star as a adult siblings who run a taxidermy business by day and trap tourists to participate in drug-and-death-drenched orgies by night. True to its title, the film features an ency-

clopedic array of peculiarities including May-December sex, heroin rape, a blind medium (the Italian contribution, no doubt), human taxidermy, and an orgy accompanied by an "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida"-style drum solo. Edited by Carlo Reali and scored by Stelvio Cipriani, both of whom worked on Bava's **A BAY OF BLOOD** around the same time (strong similarities can be heard in the music). Oddly, the tape carries no Spanish subtitles for its intended audience to follow. The Eastman-color has faded to yellow, and the cropped widescreen print is extremely scratchy, raising the question: Where in hell did this ever play?

ESCAPE INFERNAL

("Escape from Hell")

While **MONDO CANE** alumnus Franco Prosperi was making escapist fare like **DICK SMART 2/007** (1966), Paolo Cavara—Prosperi's co-scenarist on **WOMEN OF THE WORLD** [*La Donna del mondo*, 1963] and the director of **MALAMONDO** [*I Malamondo*, 1964]—was exorcising the experience with this autobiographical film, originally titled **THE WILD EYE** [*L'Occhio selvaggio*, 1967]. Phillippe Leroy stars as a documentarist specializing in "mondo" movies who, during the filming of his latest project, pursues and helps to stage worse and worse atrocities without any trace of human compassion, alienating his crew and the woman devoted to him. Though the film offers some insight as to how footage of Buddhist immolations and political assassinations was acquired in those days, the film fails as autobiography and makes one wonder if Cavara wasn't simply exploiting himself to balance his conscience. The Spanish-subtitled print carries the German title *Das Wilde Auge*, but the dialogue is in Eng-

lish. It was released in the US by American International in 1968, and a collector's item soundtrack album was issued on RCA Victor.

FOLDS OF THE FLESH

It's a shame that Sergio Bergonzelli steered his career into exploitation because, on the basis of this early *giallo* — originally *Nelle pieghe della carne* ["In the Folds of the Flesh," 1970] — he could have brought a very strange sensibility to horror films. The labyrinthine plot takes a new twist every few minutes: incest, Etruscan tombs, flesh-eating vultures, Fernando Sancho on a Harley, all blend together (with endless flashbacks) into a trashy stew of enjoyable filmic excess. Pier Angeli followed this film with **OCTAMAN** (Rick Baker's first film, excerpted in his most recent movie **GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH**); director Bergonzelli did not return to the horror genre until 1988's **BLOOD DELIRIUM**.

THE IGUANA WITH A TONGUE OF FIRE

Critics tend to ignore this brutal Riccardo Freda thriller from 1971, directed under the pseudonym "Willy Pareto," but it's a competent addition of the genre. Luigi Pistilli (**A BAY OF BLOOD**) stars as a widowed detective with a teenage daughter, whose investigation into the murders of an acid-flinging maniac tempts the evil too close to his family. Set in Ireland, the film faithfully reproduces the countryside and care was taken in the dubbing to lend a believable brogue to the dialogue of certain actors. Anton Diffring, Dagmar Lassander, and the always wonderful Valentina Cortese round out the cast. Unlike the Spanish-language version which is also available on video, this tape (in English with Spanish *subtítulos*) is uncut,

with disfigurement *spfx* and nudity intact.

THE KILLER MUST STRIKE AGAIN

If you think Luigi Cozzi can make only bottom-of-the-barrel SFantasy films, track down this sick puppy. The film opens with a killer fondling the breast of his latest victim, and bloodshed and nudity are sustained throughout the next 90m at extremely high levels, in a stifling atmosphere of sleaze. The cast features such Euro-trash familiars as George Hilton (**NEXT!**), Cristina Galbo (**THE HOUSE THAT SCREAMED**), and Eduardo Fajardo (**DJANGO**). Femi Benussi, an alumnus of **BLOODY PIT OF HORROR** and **HATCHET FOR THE HONEYMOON**, appears in an outrageously gratuitous bit part consisting only of a nude scene and violent death! The Italian-language version, *L'Assassino costretto ucciderla ancora*, is available in the US on the New York-based Domovideo label.

SOLAMENTE NERO

("Pitch Black")

The credits of this obscure *giallo* are in Italian, but the video itself is dubbed into English. Director-writer Antonio Bido (whose **WATCH ME WHEN I KILL** is available from HBO Video) was evidently much influenced by Pupi Avati's masterpiece *La Casa dalle finestre che ridono*, as that film's star — Lino Capolito — joins forces with Stefania Casini to uncover the past sins of a rural village. Craig Hill co-stars as a priest with a skeleton or two in his closet. Composer Stelvio Cipriani's music is clearly influenced by the Goblin score for **SUSPIRIA** (also '77). Perhaps Casini, one of the film's co-stars, smuggled him an advance tape? 

A NOTE TO OUR READERS

VW is regularly deluged with requests for additional information about where the tapes reviewed in our Asian-American and Venezuelan sections can be acquired.

Erik Sulev rents the Asian-American material he reviews from a Chinese video store in Toronto, Ontario. Any large city with a significant Asian population should have at least one such shop. Video Vault — a Washington DC-based mail order rental source — is presently assembling its own Asian-American section, including many of the titles reviewed here. For more information, phone 1-800-VAULT-66, toll-free. Also, see Erik's "Kennel" notice for late-breaking news...

Craig Ledbetter covers our Venezuelan beat from cassettes mailed to him by a friend who frequents Piwi Video, a Venezuelan-stocked store in Miami. Piwi only rents its impressive stock of titles to locals. A select few Venezuelan titles are being offered by Video Vault and by Marshall Discount Video (313-671-5483; P.O. Box 328, Trenton MI 48183), such as **Canibal Holocausto**, **Dejen Que Los Muertos Duerman**, [Jorge Grau's **THE LIVING DEAD AT MANCHESTER MORGUE**], and **THE LAST HOUSE ON DEAD END STREET**; shop and compare. Of course, most tapes are in English with Spanish *subtítulos*.

Beyond that, Watchdogs, all we can tell you is what's out there. Where you find it is up to you... and Lady Luck.

—TL

THE EXORCIST

From the Subliminal to the Ridiculous

*By Tim Lucas
and Mark Kermode*

***"There is shock,
but it is over as fast as
you can snap your fingers."***
— William Peter Blatty

***"There is a power
in this film that is
beyond the film."***
— Rev. Billy Graham

Warner Home Video (VHS),
HF/D/S, \$19.95, (LD) \$24.95
All EXORCIST photos ©1973
Warner Bros., Inc. and Hoya Productions, Inc.

*Opposite: Captain Howdy (Eileen Dietz)
materializes for a split-second
in the nightmare of vulnerable
priest Damien Karras.*



THE USE OF SUBLIMINAL images is both natural and dangerous territory for the horror film. The use of single or double-frame inserts into stretches of unrelated footage—to enhance the impact of said material—is one of the few avenues open to the horror cinema which allow an audience to glimpse visual information indirectly, out of the corner of its collective eye. When you think of it, it's a miracle that the technique hasn't been explored and exploited more often, if only as a means of punctuation, a means of lending the occasional celluloid sentence an exclamatory tilt. William Friedkin's **THE EXORCIST**, based on the novel by William Peter Blatty, is one of the most famous examples of a feature





Rehearsal: Long-legged Eileen Dietz (in black socks) tests Marcel Vercoutere's levitation apparatus with Max von Sydow and Jason Miller.

film that makes extensive use of subliminal sound and images, but it was by no means the first.

The Antecedents

Alfred Hitchcock was among the first directors to use subliminal images in his films, and he was one of the few to pursue the technique as an ongoing experiment. Hitchcock toyed with subliminal sound in Britain's first talkie **BLACKMAIL** (1929), in which Anny Ondra is rattled as the word "knife" recurs in conversation around her. For the climax of the monochromatic **SPELLBOUND** (1945), Hitchcock inserted color frames to the gunblast of Leo G. Carroll's suicide. In 1955, a single subliminal cut was used for dramatic effect in **TO CATCH A THIEF** (Paramount, \$19.95); while driving along the steep cliffs of Monaco, Grace Kelly sees through the disguise of burglar Cary Grant ("You're John Robie — The Cat!") and the image of Grant's black housecat flashes onscreen. Hitchcock's **PSYCHO** (MCA, 1960) was the first film with subliminal flourishes to be appreciated by a large audience; the shower murder remains the masterpiece of subliminal horror — witness the still-rampant falsehood that "one never sees the knife touching the body," which Hitch himself delighted in propagating — while the fleeting superimposition of Mother on Norman's face at the end is a chilling finale.

Other disciples of the technique were less refined in its uses. The trailer for **IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE** (1958, available on Sinister Cinema's "Classic Sci-Fi Trailers, Volume 1") featured flashes of "See IT!" and other imperatives over highlights from the film. William S. Edwards' low-budget **TERROR IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE** (1958; Rhino, \$19.95) peppered its drab storyline with intermittent 16-frame exposures (1/50th of a second) of skulls, snakes, and encouragements like "Scream!"¹ Ironically, William Castle's **THE TINGLER** achieved greater success in the following year by taking the opposite tack, turning off its image track altogether and shouting "Scream!" at its audience.

Roman Polanski's **ROSEMARY'S BABY** (1968; Paramount, \$59.95), produced by Castle, recovers much of Hitchcock's class in its own approach to subliminals. Polanski is sedulously true to Ira Levin's best-selling novel, save in one respect: *the baby is never shown*. The novel, so closely followed in every other respect by the film, describes the cloven-hoofed infant in detail. The result was that millions of readers actually left theaters convinced that they had seen this crucial paragraph onscreen as well.

More recently, Australian director George Miller inaugurated the age of subliminal *makeup* effects. Frame-by-frame study reveals that, in both **THE ROAD WARRIOR** (Paramount, 1981) and the "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet" episode of **TWILIGHT**



Linda Blair floats for posterity.

ZONE: THE MOVIE (MCA, 1983), the eyes of two different characters are fleetingly shown inflating like balloons with surprise, enabling Miller to reap the emotional surprise of cartoonish reactions without obliterating the hard-edged realism of the action scenes in which they are couched.

In many of these films, viewers were not always conscious of the presence of subliminal material but, in the case of **THE EXORCIST**, audiences were immediately on the defense. Even so, there has never been an accurate reading of these images, their uses, and their impact.

"I saw subliminal cuts in a number of films before I ever put them in **THE EXORCIST**, and I thought it was a very effective storytelling device," recalls director William Friedkin. "[Alain Resnais'] **NIGHT AND FOG** is the best example, but they are also used in [Sidney Lumet's] **THE PAWNBROKER**."

"There are hundreds of films that use subliminal cutting for dramatic effect," Friedkin continues. "They don't do it to get 'demonic ideas' across. The subliminal editing in **THE EXORCIST** was done for *dramatic* effect—to create, achieve, and sustain a kind of dreamlike state. There's subliminal cutting in a lot of the advertising you see on television, where they're trying subliminally to sell you not just a product but sex, or the promise of great wealth, or any number of other things which are difficult to obtain. But the subliminal cutting idea in **THE EXORCIST**... that's something that got blown out of pro-

portion by people who didn't understand what it was."

The Exorcist Parlor Masseur

The first popular document to attempt the cataloguing of such material in **THE EXORCIST** was Wilson Bryan Key's **MEDIA SEXPLOITATION**, a 1976 sequel to his earlier book **SUBLIMINAL SEDUCTION**. **MEDIA SEXPLOITATION** was Key's second analysis of consumer manipulation via secret messages implanted within forms of contemporary entertainment and advertising. While some of Key's findings were undoubtedly authentic and valuable, others appeared to be filtered through bias-colored glasses, notably his chapter "Subliminal Rock," which analyzes Paul Simon's song "Bridge Over Troubled Water" as "symbolically a drug-user's guide to withdrawal into a syringe-injected hallucinatory drug experience."² Unsurprisingly, Key most recently resurfaced in the limelight as an expert witness for the prosecution in a teen suicide case against the heavy metal group Judas Priest.

Written in the near-hysterical wake of the film's original release, Key's chapter "The Exorcist Massage Parlor" has dated into the perfect emblem of his work: sound in its intentions, exaggerated in its findings. In 1973-4, due to Warner's refusal to allow their blockbuster to be autopsied so soon in print,



Key was forced to base his research solely on his own theatrical impressions and the testimony of a theater owner, quoted in a Delaware newspaper. Today, with VCRs and laserdisc players built to permit single-frame access, and **THE EXORCIST** itself widely available on Warner Home Video (in a newly digitally-processed transfer), it is much easier to spot-check the film for little jack-in-a-boxes tucked between its frames.

Key described **THE EXORCIST** as "a brilliant repertoire of visual and auditory subliminal innovations," and warned that "for a small minority, [it] could be threatening, or even dangerous."³ Among Key's charges of sneaky, subconscious foul play is the claim that, during a scene in which Merrin kneels beside Regan's bed, "his breath condensed [and] a ghostly face appeared momentarily in the cloud. This face, apparently drawn on several frames, was also consciously invisible to the audience." Furthermore, Key insists that "while Father Karras prays in church, a skull-shaped shadow appears on the white wall behind him." Close examination of a video print of **THE EXORCIST** fails to support these outlandish claims; nor does it seem possible that, as Key also asserts, that the word PIG scrawled on a ledge on the Hitchcock stairs subconsciously reinforces the demonic imagery.

William Friedkin has never read "The Exorcist Massage Parlor" or heard of Wilson Bryan Key. "You mean the steps in Georgetown?" he exclaimed, when told about this finding. "I filmed those steps exactly as I found them. I didn't do anything to them. It was an area where the students used to graffiti the walls, but I don't remember the word PIG being there. If it was, we didn't put it there. If it's in the picture, it's strictly accidental. Very often, these things that I hear about are not invalid, but they certainly weren't intended, not consciously."

Whether Key is remarking that the MacNeil house is full of mirrors (though Regan herself is never shown casting a reflection in one), or that her padded bedposts cast suspiciously phallic shadows, he generally reaches too far for examples to support his thesis. He does, however, do a good job of reporting the film's uses of subliminal audio (bees, slaughtered animals, Mercedes McCambridge) and manages to ferret out the essential truth about Friedkin's

storytelling techniques in **THE EXORCIST**, which makes extensive use of foreshadowing, audio and visual manipulation, and other parlor tricks.

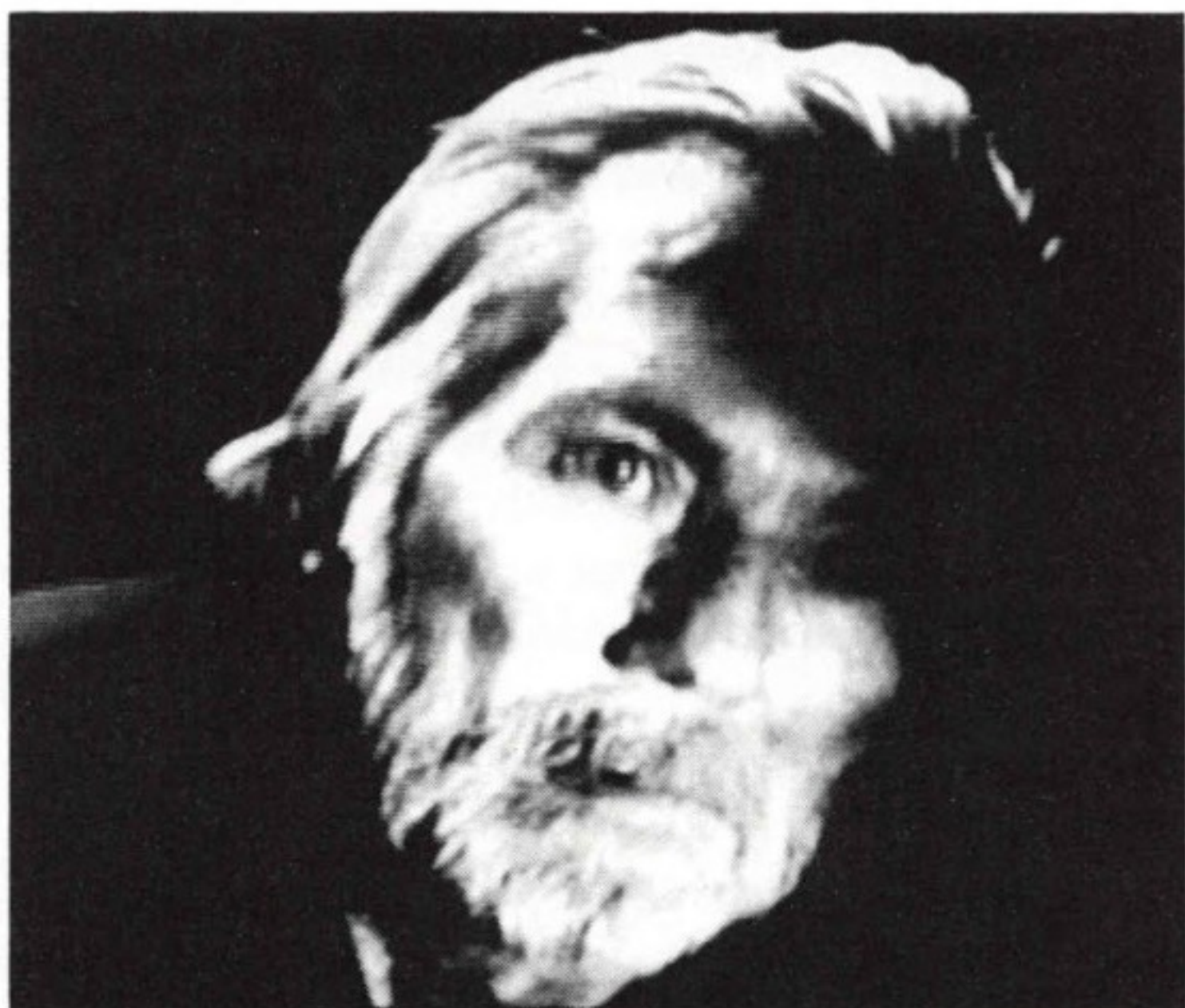
Perhaps the most intriguing of the claims in Key's book is his "pink rose theory." Key notes that a single pink rose appears in a teapot as a wallclock in Iraq ceases to function, that the apartment of Karras' mother is papered with pink roses, that Chris is in fact holding a pink rose when Regan crashes the party by urinating on the rug. This stratagem cooks up rather half-baked on home video, but it's exactly the kind of creative mischief Friedkin was up to elsewhere.

Throughout **THE EXORCIST**, images and situations rhyme to suffuse the film with fatalistic symmetry. Some of these visual relationships are simple but effective—such as the resemblance of the possessed Regan MacNeil to the leper woman in the dark droshky seen during the film's Iraq prologue. (The leper can be found on Warner's laserdisc, Disc 1A, Chapter 1, 8m, 40-42s.) Others are exhaustive and make a deeper, more unsettling impression.

The Medal

The St. Joseph Medal that appears throughout **THE EXORCIST** is the real pink rose. It first appears during the archeological dig in Iraq, unearthed by Father Merrin ("This is strange," he says). As William Peter Blatty remarks in his invaluable book **ON THE EXORCIST**, this excavation represents the impossible encasement of a Christian symbol within a pre-Christian depth of rock. This symbol of Good is found buried beside a small encrusted head of Pazuzu, prefiguring the confrontation in Georgetown. The medal next appears around the neck of Karras' mother (Vasiliki Maliaros, who's broken her leg in a prophetic fall down stairs and resides, appropriately, in Hell's Kitchen); her troubled son inherits it upon her death. The slow-motion shot of the medal, falling past an Iraqi tapestry and landing on a brick surface more evocative of Georgetown, prominently figures in Karras' dream. The demon possessing Regan is only able to possess Karras by tearing this medal from his neck, rendering him vulnerable in a way that recalls his earlier visit to his mother at the sanitarium, when his priest's collar is torn off by a patient, visually cementing his loss of faith. It was Blatty's intention that the MacNeils keep the medal at the film's conclusion, as a subtle admission of influenced faith; Friedkin overrode this vision during the filming, and **THE EXORCIST** ends with Chris offering it to Father Dyer as a remembrance of his late friend. The implicit message is that Chris

Cinematographer Owen Roizman and William Friedkin (in beret) prepare to film on the Hitchcock stairs, which connect Prospect and M Streets in Washington DC's Georgetown district.



*The many faces of Captain Howdy:
The Old Altar Boy (uncredited), encountered by
Karras in the subway station...*



*...Captain Howdy (Dietz)'s second appearance—
during the exorcism, following the bed's
levitation...*

remains unconverted, but the kiss which Regan plants on Dyer's cheek in farewell implies that she, at least, may feel otherwise. By resurfacing at select points throughout the film, the medal projects the kind of eerie, supernatural resonance that several superstitious religious leaders have interpreted as truly demoniacal. Had William Friedkin told this story *this way* at a different point in history, he would have been burned at the stake.

The Apparition

Elsewhere in "The Exorcist Massage Parlor," Wilson Bryan Key reports that "numerous times during the movie there was a sudden flash of light and the face of Father Karras momentarily appeared as a large, full-screen death mask apparition—the skin greasy white, the mouth a blood red gash." Again, this time, he is only *partially* correct.

This ghastly visage, which appears three times during **THE EXORCIST**, may resemble a death mask at a glance, but it is *not* the face of Father Karras (Jason Miller). This image, which has the power to unnerve the viewer even in still-frame, has the uncanny ability to suggest a presence hiding within the forest of flickering frames which is the film itself. For lack of a better name, we'll use the name given to this presence by its unwilling host: Captain Howdy.

"Those are frames from a makeup test that didn't work, which we did with Linda Blair's double, Eileen Dietz," William Friedkin says, identifying the

footage on the record for the first time. "The makeup was intended for use on Linda Blair. I rejected it as having no organic validity as to what was happening with the girl in the film; it was just makeup. But it seemed to me that it had a power if used briefly like that, so I took these frames (that were not meant to be used in the original production) and cut them in, experimentally. It seemed to work. I like the use of them."

Captain Howdy first appears during Karras' dream, perhaps the film's single most frightening sequence and a masterpiece of audience manipulation. A series of dissociated images are played out to the tune of a ticking clock. (Of course, the random halt of a pendulum clock is among the first supernatural events to occur in the film; with this occurrence unexplained, the mere sound of ticking sound sets the viewer ill-at-ease.) We see glimpses, in this Georgetownian's dream, of images from Iraq: the pendulum clock, the mad dog. There is an image of Karras' mother, unnaturally lit, followed by a single frame of her outline filled with white light. Karras runs. He sees his mother emerging from the stairs of a subway station. He waves to her. She calls to him. After she calls to him a second time, the shot cuts to two frames of black, from which the demonic face of Captain Howdy appears for one frame, followed by a white frame, then a repeated frame of the face, and the dream resolves with a shot of the falling St. Joseph's Medal.

Ironically, Captain Howdy's first appearance is inaccessible on Warner's laserdisc, where it appears on the A-side of the first CLV disc (only Side 3 is CAV

for single-frame access). Karras' dream is located in 1A's Chapter 9, and Captain Howdy should appear at 42m 4s, between the 10th and 13th frames. Because of laser technology, which reproduces 24 f.p.s. film at 16 f.p.s., a single-frame examination of this excerpt reveals only a white frame, a black frame, and another white frame—no Captain Howdy. The face can still be glimpsed, of course, as the disc plays at normal speed. The information is there, but it cannot be isolated.

Friedkin: "I used [subliminal edits] during the dream sequence simply because the pacing created by mixing shots that stay on the screen a little bit longer, with shots that stay on the screen for only a few frames, was kind of the way I perceived my own dreams."

But why does this face convey such effect within the context of **THE EXORCIST**? The answer again has to do with the resonance of Friedkin's storytelling methods. Much of the film's most important dialogue seems to cut across time, finding its importance in scenes and characters that appear only much later. Merrin's name can be heard on Regan's backward-masked voice recordings before he is summoned to Georgetown, and the demon looks ahead to the film's final possession by telling Karras during his first visit that the real agenda is to "bring you [not Regan] closer to us." The film's visuals work in a similarly telegraphic way.

To understand how the face of Captain Howdy affects its audience, we must return to an earlier scene in which Karras encounters an old derelict in a subway station: "*Can you help an old altar boy, Father? I'm a Cath'lic.*" These words—spoken from a long shot with the man obscured in shadows—interrupt a shot of the subway tracks being cooled by a luminous jet of vapor, cutting away to Karras' reaction, then back to a closeup of the beggar's face, as the lights of a passing train strobe over his abandoned features. Though passed off almost incidentally in terms of the story's overall structure, Friedkin imbues this encounter—which somehow lays bare the weakest link in Karras' faltering faith—with a supernatural resonance by prefiguring the roar of the train with the clanging sounds of industry among the Iraqi workers in the film's prologue, and by following it with the deafening, reminiscent sounds of the hammering of Regan's bucking bed legs against the floor, and her gruelling spinal tap procedure (itself followed by an equally reminiscent selection of ghastly white head X-rays).

The interrupted shot of the cool cloud of air mustn't be underestimated, as its placement before the shots of the derelict is likely the reason why Wilson Bryan Key believed he saw faces lurking in



...Two subliminal views of the Captain—not included in the feature film—from an **EXORCIST** TV spot...

...Father Karras (Jason Miller) allows himself to be invaded by the demon in order to destroy it.



William Friedkin demonstrates the proper reaction to ball-grabbing for actors Arthur Storch and Eileen Dietz.

the visible breaths of the priests during the exorcism. The shots have a cumulative, mathematical effect, the sum of which is discomfort whenever smoke appears in subsequent scenes.

When Captain Howdy appears sandwiched between black and white frames in Karras' dream, the flash similarly recalls the strobing of lights over the beggar's face; *the demon has found a way into this priest*. The same path steals its way, equally effectively, into the manipulated viewer. Thereafter, whether or not the viewer is conscious of having glimpsed the demon's face, Friedkin's subsequent use of flickering lights, or even extended periods of darkness (as that which precedes the hypnotism scene), inspires subconscious tension within the viewer. The most obvious instances of flickering light occur in the MacNeil kitchen prior to the news of Burke Dennings' death, and just before Chris' first view of Regan's violently rocking bed.

The subsequent appearances of Captain Howdy also play on associations derived from the subway encounter. The demon is manifest onscreen for the second and third times during the exorcism sequence. The second immediately follows the levitation of Regan's bed; as the bed crashes back onto the floor, the film cuts to a close shot of Regan's tossing head, strobe lights playing over her face. Between the alternating light and darkness, like that seen in the subway station, Howdy's face appears at a similarly horizontal angle (Warner Disc 2A (CAV),

Chapter 2, 9372-9380 frames); the fact that this shot is surrounded by close-ups of Jason Miller's pensive face, suggests that this insight is meant to reflect Karras' own point of view.

The final appearance — also shown from Karras' perspective — follows the second rotation of Regan's head. At first glance, this appears to be a double exposure of the demon's face in motion behind Blair's stationary expression. (See Front Cover or Disc 2A (CAV), Chapter 3, 12647-12686 frames.) "It's not literally a double exposure, but actually an overlapping of two images," explains makeup artist Dick Smith. "Linwood Dunn, who did the film's optical effects, came in and set-up a split-image situation on the set one day, I remember. I made up Eileen Dietz in a ghost-like makeup. It's a tight shot, and the most terrifying image I've seen in the film, really." According to Smith, Dunn used a beam-splitter to match a live, glass reflection of Dietz speaking in Captain Howdy makeup (she seems to be saying "you") over a head-shot of Smith's life-size, animatronic Blair dummy, which remained stationary in contrast. This shot is not only the perfect emblem of the film's subliminal information but, because of the way it lends an illusion of life to the dummy's motionless face, also its most resonant depiction of demonic possession.

Most viewers, like Key, connect the face of Captain Howdy with Father Karras — and assume that Jason Miller is behind the makeup — because of its



Owen Roizman films Dietz's lethal hand-hold with a handheld Panaflex.

foreshadowing of the climactic scene in which Karras invites the demon to leave Regan and come into him. The demon tears away Karras' protective medal and, after a smoke-like effusion passes between them, Miller's face flickers from its original state to a pallid version with luminous green eyes. This is the moment when the film's three visual touchstones—the medal, the smoke, the white face—appear in concert, and the effect is galvanizing.

"I tried an actual mask on Jason, rather a subtle foam latex appliance," Dick Smith reveals. "Funny thing was, he had one of those faces where it just didn't work. The mask made him look womanish and strange; it didn't strengthen him at all. So we finally abandoned the mask idea and made him look pallid—not white, certainly—and we gave him greenish contact lenses. But that was the only thing, in terms of makeup, that was done to him."

Surprisingly, Captain Howdy went on to make one significant appearance outside **THE EXORCIST**. In a TV spot designed for broadcast after Warner's year-long ban on makeup shots was lifted, Captain Howdy appeared in three separate 1-2 frame-long shots, accompanied (and half-obsured) by bursts of light. Taboo images of the possessed Regan were included, as well. The most fascinating detail about the images of Captain Howdy was that they were not taken from the film itself; rather, they were high-contrast shots culled from the same photo session that produced the facial image in Karras' dream.

These extremely rare shots are reproduced in this issue for the first time anywhere.

Ghastly white faces surface in Blatty's films of **THE NINTH CONFIGURATION** and **THE EXORCIST III**, as well. In **CONFIGURATION**, much attention is paid to the faces of the pallid busts adorning the asylum, and one scene match-cuts a shot of flashing lightning to a photograph of a powder-faced Bela Lugosi. In **THE EXORCIST III**, a view of a flickering chandelier cuts to the surreal image of a religious icon bearing the face of Bob Kane's creation, the Joker—white-faced, green-haired, laughing. Perhaps for legal reasons, Blatty denies that the icon is the Joker and, though he claims to have been unaware of the recurring white faces in his trilogy of films, finds the symmetry an intriguing coincidence.

The Substitutions

According to William Friedkin, the contribution of Eileen Dietz to **THE EXORCIST** consists of exactly 10 shots. When Dietz entered into a well-publicized 1974 lawsuit against Warner Brothers for screen credit and acknowledgement of her role, the Warners attorneys timed her footage at 28.15s.

Based on our individual examinations of the film, Dietz is present in the following shots: **1)** Captain Howdy's appearance in Karras' dream—three frames separated by one white frame, thus



technically *two* appearances. **2)** she doubles for Linda Blair after the second rocking bed scene, when Regan raises her nightdress, falls to her knees, and demands "Fuck me!" **3)** Dietz' hand was used to grab the psychiatrist's crotch during the hypnotism sequence. **4)** Dietz' hand and body were used for all non-facial shots during the crucifix masturbation scene, including pushing Burstyn's face into her bloodied crotch and slapping her across the room. **5)** A brief shot of Dietz as Regan, vomit spurting from her mouth, appears following the cutaway shot of Karras struck by two streams of projectile vomit. **6)** Captain Howdy's second appearance. **7)** Captain Howdy's third appearance. **8)** As Regan, silhouetted against the apparition of Pazuzu. **9)** As Regan in two shots as Merrin comforts her, while thick green vomit oozes from her mouth onto his purple stole.

There is a fascinating story behind the presence of Eileen Dietz in the vomiting scenes. "Unbeknownst to me, the vomiting thing was changed, much later," reports Dick Smith. "There was the projectile vomiting, which I did with Dietz wearing a rig that I had applied inside her mouth. Billy said that he didn't want a solid stream; he wanted the flow to be sort of *broadcast*. I gave him the effect he wanted but I noticed, while seeing the film for the first time, that the effect turned out differently. It wasn't until later, when Warners was suing some other company for ripping-off **THE EXORCIST**,⁴ that the lawyers confessed to me that the projectile vomiting, as it appears in the final cut, had been *matted-in*! They hadn't used the actual take; instead, they filmed Linda lunging forward with her mouth open and inserted a separately photo-

Makeup artist Dick Smith positions his projectile vomit device inside the mouth of Eileen Dietz, then camouflages the rig with external cosmetic appliances.



The projectile vomit effect, as engineered by Smith with Dietz, which does NOT appear in the final film.

graphed vomit projection. When you see Dietz lying in bed, with her head on its side, vomiting this slow, thick substance into Max's purple stole... that's the only time my makeup device for the vomit effect was used in the film!"

The footage of Dietz which follows Father Karras' bilious baptism is clearly taken from Smith's original projectile vomit effect, and was perhaps forgotten by Friedkin in his haste to have the effect rephotographed during post-production. This amazing footage--in which Dietz' features are quite evident under the possession makeup, and the dregs of the vomit still burbling from her oral device--can be found on Warner's disc on Disc 1B, Chapter 7, from 37m 24s (13th frame) to 37m 25s (11th frame).



It is a tribute to William Friedkin's cinematic cunning that, in the end, a deconstruction of the subliminal content and storytelling techniques of **THE EXORCIST** is powerless to negate the film's extraordinary potency. It actually enhances them.


There is indeed "a power in the film that is beyond the film." Call it the sanctity of art.

NOTES

- ¹ *Rhino replaced many of the film's original subliminal images and directives with material of their own, allowing them to copyright the public domain film as a piece of original programming.*
- ² *Key, Wilson Bryan: MEDIA SEXPLOITATION (Prentice-Hall hardcover, Signet Paperback), p. 140. Page numbers are from the paperback edition.*
- ³ *Ibid., p. 101. All "Exorcist Massage Parlor" quotes can be found in pages 101-109.*
- ⁴ *This was presumably Warner's case against American International Pictures and the producers of their 1974 blaxploitation release **ABBY**, directed by William Girdler. Warners succeeded in having **ABBY** withdrawn from release, and the film—a vulgarization of the Blatty story, starring William Marshall and Carol Speed—has since become a virtually "lost" title.*

[Thanks to Dennis Daniel, Sam Stetson and Bret Wood for assistance in researching this article.]



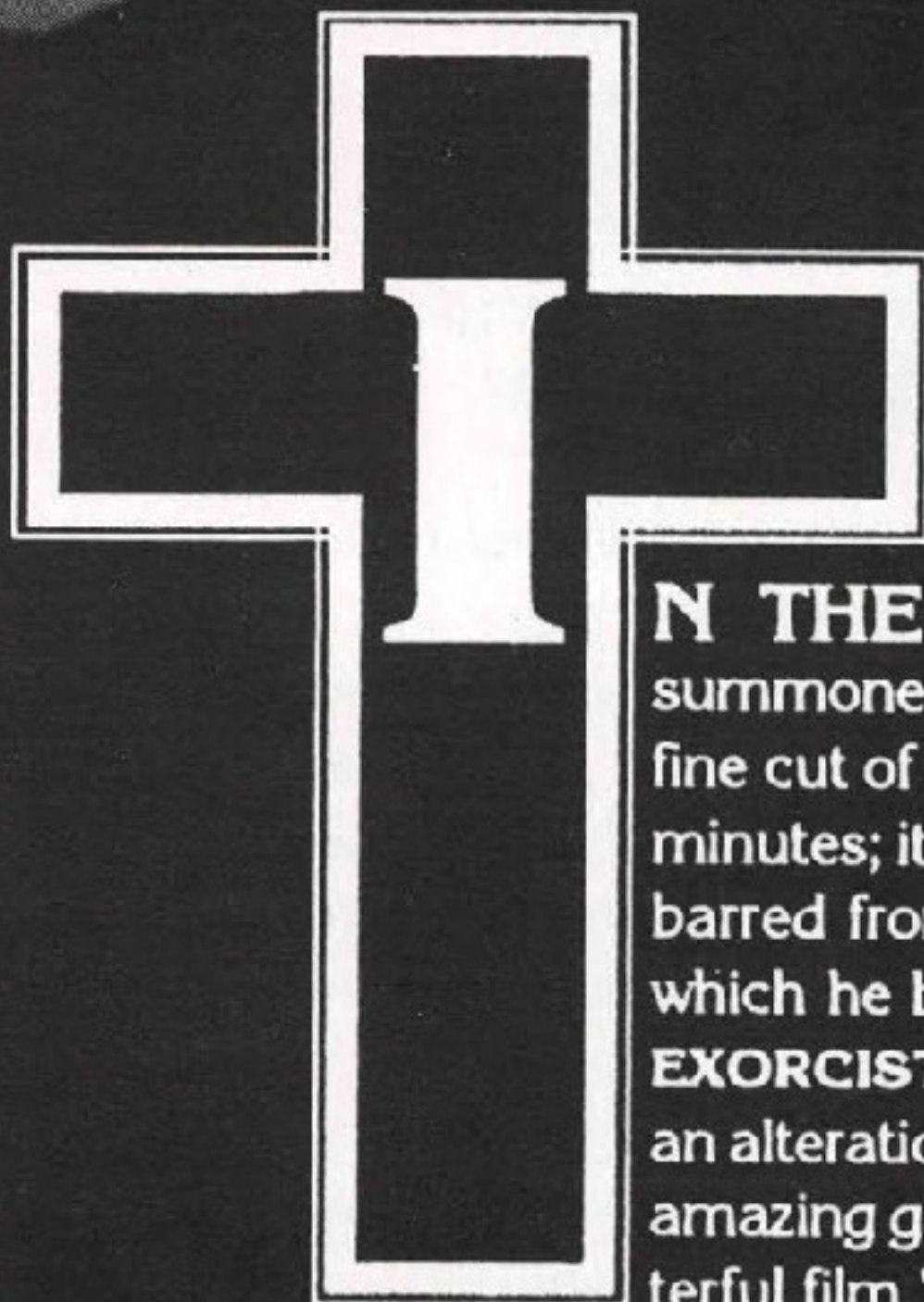


The Mysteries

*Misinformation & Missing
By Mark*

*"In editing THE EXORCIST,
every effort has been made
to underplay the metaphysics,
and play up the horror."*

— William Friedkin



IN THE FALL OF 1973, DIRECTOR WILLIAM FRIEDKIN summoned writer-producer William Peter Blatty to his office for a screening of the first fine cut of **THE EXORCIST**. According to Blatty, this cut ran to two hours and twenty minutes; it was "a masterwork." However, in the following weeks, Blatty found himself barred from post-production as Friedkin proceeded to excise a number of scenes which he believed were adversely affecting the pace of the movie. By the time **THE EXORCIST** opened on December 26, 1973, its running time was down to 121 minutes, an alteration which Blatty deeply regrets, and which he describes as creating "the most amazing gaps in the carpentry of the story," downgrading the whole from "a truly masterful film," to merely "a superb thriller."

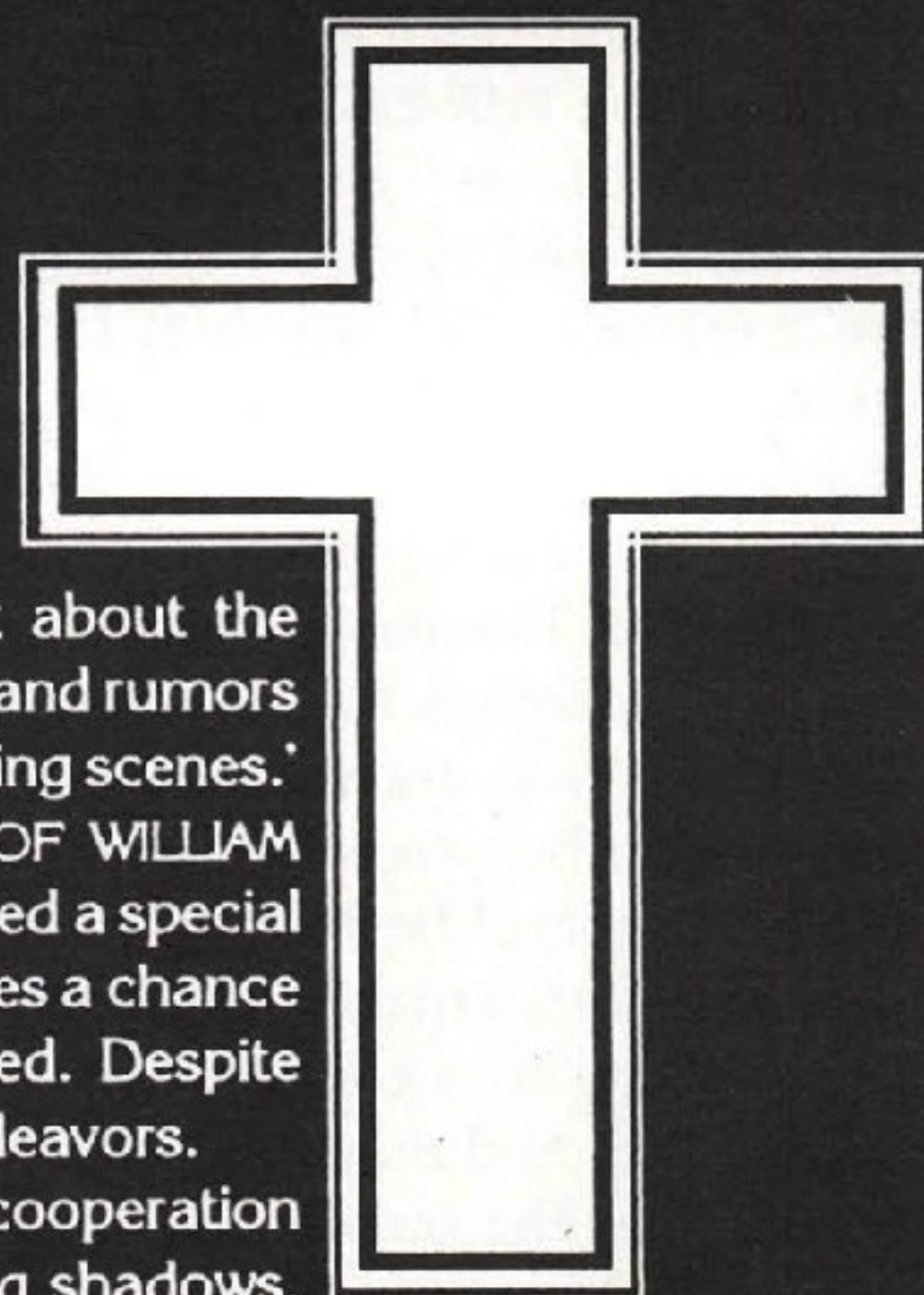
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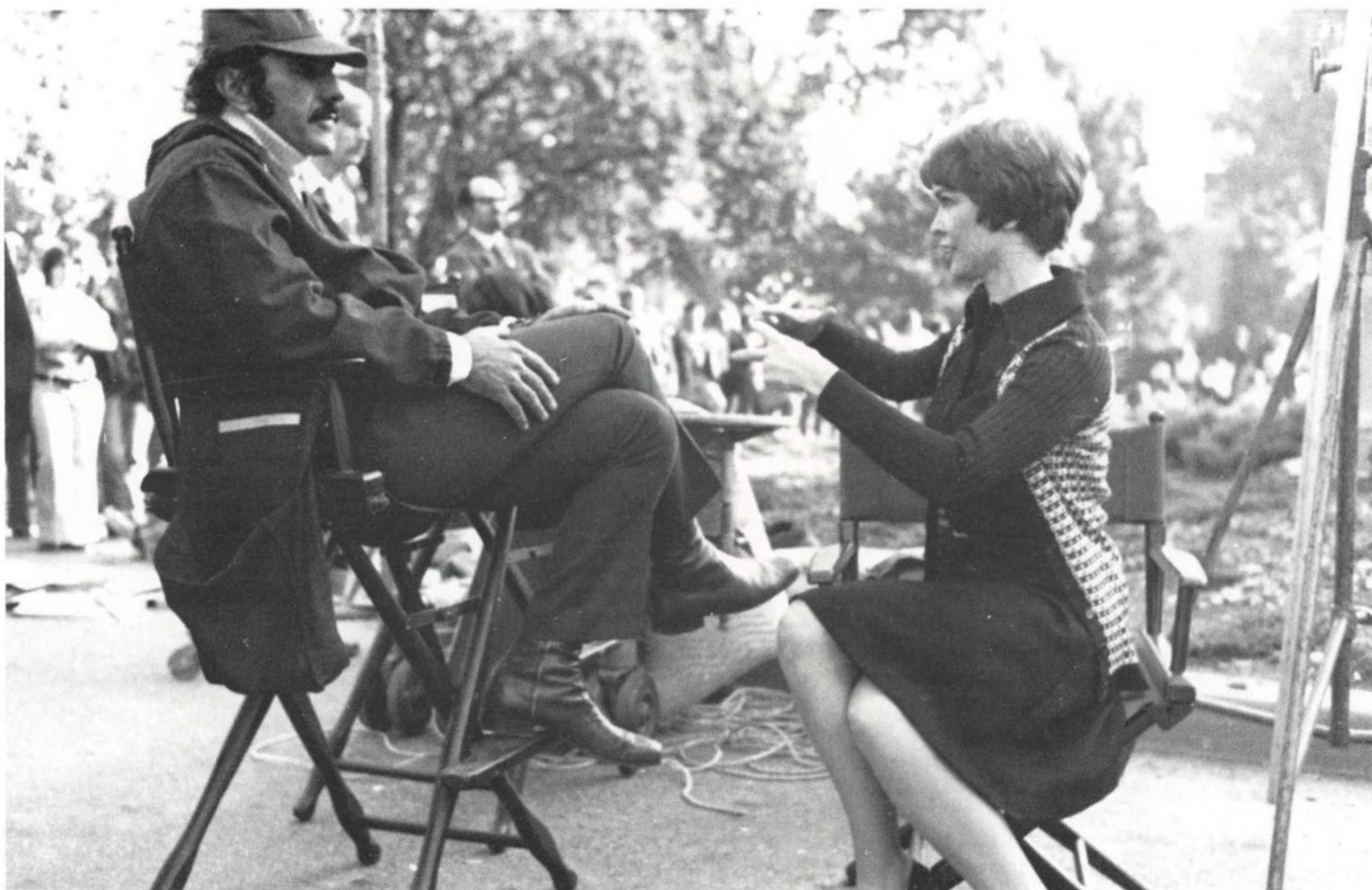
Scenes in THE EXORCIST
Kermode

*"If you were looking for the
murderer, arrest the director."
— Chris MacNeil in a line cut from
THE EXORCIST*

On various occasions in the ensuing years, Blatty has spoken out about the "catalogue of dismemberment" which haunted the film's post-production, and rumors have circulated regarding the possible re-instatement of the so-called 'missing scenes.' In his excellent book *HURRICANE BILLY—THE STORMY LIFE AND FILMS OF WILLIAM FRIEDKIN* (William Morrow & Co., 1990), Nat Segaloff reported that Blatty desired a special restored edition of **THE EXORCIST** to be released on video, giving audiences a chance finally to see for themselves the "masterwork" which Blatty first approved. Despite strenuous efforts to this end, Blatty has remained unsuccessful in his endeavors.

One reason why Blatty's attempts have failed may be the absence of cooperation from William Friedkin, who asserts forcefully that Blatty is simply chasing shadows.





Ellen Burstyn converses with writer-producer William Peter Blatty on the set of the "student demonstration" film-within-the-film.

"There is no extra twenty minutes," he declares assuredly. "That's just sheer invention. The stuff Blatty is talking about, at the most, would add up to five minutes, and those five minutes would *seem* like twenty! It would bore the shit out of you!" He concedes, however, that scenes featured in rough cuts of the film, were cut in the final months of production. "One of the things I was conscious of doing while editing **THE EXORCIST** was to keep it moving and not stop in one place anywhere, where the audience could say 'Oh wait a minute, fella...' while we're explaining this and that. I tried to keep it going from one event to the next. I shot those scenes and didn't cut them until I saw how the whole picture played. This happens with every film."

Despite Friedkin's defiant assertions, Blatty remains adamant that a superior version of **THE EXORCIST** was once screened for him, and *that* is the version by which he stands. "When I first approved the film," he describes, "[it] was twenty minutes longer, much more fully fleshed, and didn't have certain gaps in its construction which are quite evident to me. And *that's* the version that I want, the version that Bill screened for me on the movieola, and which I approved."

But does a longer version actually exist, or are the elements from which a reinstated cut could be assembled currently gathering dust, somewhere deep in the Warner vaults? "I've asked Bill Friedkin that a thousand times," sighs Blatty, "and he says he doesn't know, that all of that footage is probably lost, destroyed. I don't have a copy of it. I *saw* it, I approved it, and then suddenly, as you know, I was barred from the lot at Warner Brothers while Friedkin recut it."

"He was barred from the set because he was being a pain in the ass," laughs Friedkin. "But my feeling, while I'm telling you all this, is that the great achievement of **THE EXORCIST** is his. It's *his* creation, *his* vision, *his* work. I see myself as an interpreter. But it's the old argument—Stravinsky used to go around saying that everyone who conducted his music was doing it wrong, that they didn't understand it. This may be true, but that's what you have to do when you leave something open for interpretation, and it's my interpretation of **THE EXORCIST** on the screen. In 99% percent of the areas that were important, Blatty and I were in complete agreement. In 1% we were not, and it just so happened that I prevailed in that. But he prevailed in



THE EXORCIST was William Friedkin's first feature after becoming the youngest recipient of the Best Director Oscar—for *THE FRENCH CONNECTION* (1971).

getting his wonderful vision on the screen. And it is *his* vision, not my own."

Friedkin, who recently completed the re-mastering of *SORCERER* for its release on home video and laserdisc, praises these mediums as the living archives of cinema. "It was wonderful to work in the video medium," he enthuses. "This is the *real* area of film preservation. I felt I was now able to preserve this film forever, as opposed to having a negative deteriorating somewhere like a portrait of Dorian Gray. I think video is the most important medium going and, in many ways, it's much more appealing to watch a film on video than in a theater. Certainly, in the area of preservation, it is the answer." Friedkin remains adamant, however that, despite directors (such as James Cameron) who use the video/laser mediums to present their work with reinstated footage, none of his own films would benefit from the replacement of formerly deleted material. "I don't have anything like that in any film I've made. With everything I've made, I cut it as I thought was right. I may often have been wrong, but I don't think there's any out-takes that would affect the movies I've made in any ways other than to make them longer and, therefore, harder to sit through."

Blatty, however, is emphatic that Friedkin *did* seriously consider the possibility of re-editing *THE EXORCIST* on a number of occasions, and suggests that his ultimate refusal to do so has been influenced by studio executives. "At one point, Friedkin and I agreed that we were going to shoot a new ending to *THE EXORCIST* and restore all of the missing footage. A Warners executive talked him out of it, on the following basis: 'Alfred Hitchcock made many errors in his films but he never went back to correct them. Why should we?' I don't know what to say to that... other than we should make the corrections because they're *right*."

Blatty's impassioned extolling of the virtues of the film's original fine cut must certainly cause many *vidéastes* to long for the chance to judge this version for themselves. Although a video release of an 'EXORCIST—SPECIAL EDITION' seems unlikely to say the least, it is possible, by examining Blatty's various screenplays, to divine how some of the missing pieces would have looked.

Ironically, Blatty's lengthy first draft screenplay was rejected by Friedkin on the grounds that it wasn't faithful to the novel. This ambitious (and lengthy) script was published in WILLIAM PETER

BLATTY ON THE EXORCIST (Bantam Books, 1974), a fascinating paperback original which also contains a transcript of the movie as it finally appeared on screen, featuring Blatty's comments on the changes and why they were made. Yet between these two versions lies a third, unpublished script, known as the 'Final' or 'Shooting' script. This 136-page script emerged as a result of discussions between Friedkin and Blatty following the submission of Blatty's first draft, and represents the movie as its author intended it to stand, with his director's complete approval. Obviously, during the filming, extensive changes (in the form of 'pink pages') were amended to this 'final script,' and much of the dialogue was clearly reworked through improvisation. Moreover, minor cuts would doubtless have been made from this final version before shooting began, and readers should note that Blatty refers to this script (in *ON THE EXORCIST*) as containing only 133 pages. Nevertheless, this script offers some indication of which additional (or 'missing') scenes were actually shot, and how they may have been placed in the known mosaic of the finished picture.

Rats and Red Herrings

One of the elements abbreviated by Friedkin in the editing room was the onset of Regan (Linda Blair)'s illness. Blatty's final script offers a number of early hints that all is not well, commencing with actress Chris MacNeil (Ellen Burstyn)'s first conversation with her assistant Sharon (Kitty Winn), wherein it is revealed that her daughter Regan is having trouble with her math homework. Although seemingly irrelevant, this detail gains significance during Regan's first medical examination (which Friedkin cut against Blatty's wishes) in which Doctor Klein tells Chris that her daughter is suffering from "a disorder of the nerves," of which difficulties with mathematics is a symptom. "It affects the concentration..."

Here, Blatty also introduces two further significant points which are now missing. In a brief exchange with Chris, Sharon mentions that she meditates regularly, and hints at a personal spiritualism which Chris derides. This scene clearly does nothing to forward the action, other than to suggest that Sharon may be responsible for later placing the crucifix under Regan's pillow, which is later used to such nefarious ends. (In fact, Karl is the 'guilty' party, a detail revealed in the novel and first draft screenplay, but not elsewhere). This exchange is followed by a striking scene in which Regan complains of disturbances in her bedroom, introducing for the first time a hint of supernatural goings-on. Called to Regan's

bedroom to locate a missing dress, Chris finds her daughter staring silently up at the ceiling. Regan announces that she can hear "funny noises" in the attic, which Chris dismisses as "squirrels." Later that evening, Regan rises from her bed and seeks out her mother in the study, reporting further disturbances: "There's these real funny noises, Mom. It's like knocking." (The existence of a still depicting a somnambulist-looking Regan entering Chris' study suggests that this scene was indeed filmed, although in this illustration Chris is sitting at her desk, rather than lying sprawled on a rug, as the script suggests.) Blatty completes this low-key 'gradual onset' piece with Regan mentioning that she's lost a favorite book, hinting again that something is amiss.

While the loss of these scenes is hardly critical, the excision of a poignantly moving scene, in which Regan asks her mother why people die, is more regrettable. Once again, a still exists depicting Burstyn and Blair deep in conversation in an unspecified outdoor setting, suggesting that Friedkin *did* shoot this exchange. Located by Blatty at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the scene was to have followed a sight-seeing montage, showing Chris taking her daughter around Washington (Chris promises Regan such a sight-seeing tour as a birthday treat in the film's final cut). The significant section of the scene reads:

REGAN:	Mom, why do people have to die?
CHRIS:	Honey, people get tired.
REGAN:	Why does God let them?
CHRIS:	Who's been telling you about God, baby?
REGAN:	Sharon.
CHRIS:	Oh.
REGAN:	Mom, why does God <i>let</i> us get tired?
CHRIS:	Well, after a while, God gets lonesome for us, Rags. He wants us back...

This scene—which would have prepared the viewer for Regan's encroaching preoccupation with death ("You're gonna die up there," she warns an astronaut at her mother's party soon after) and the violent death of Chris' director, Burke Dennings



Regan MacNeil (Linda Blair) hears noises in the attic above her bedroom, then reports the disturbance to mother Chris (Ellen Burstyn) in a sequence cut from the final assembly.





Wilson Bryan Key, take note! Regan (Linda Blair) casts no reflection as she is tested by Dr. Klein (Barton Heyman) in the film's first—deleted—examination scene.

(Jack MacGowran)—would also have provided the only occasion on which Regan was seen outdoors, until her very last scene. Elsewhere, throughout the film, she is depicted as trapped within the MacNeil house, confined to hospital beds, or strapped to tables in examination rooms. Perhaps Friedkin realized, astutely, that a sight-seeing montage would undercut the film's sense of claustrophobia, of events closing in around Regan, locking her in the coils of an ever-tightening sense of evil.

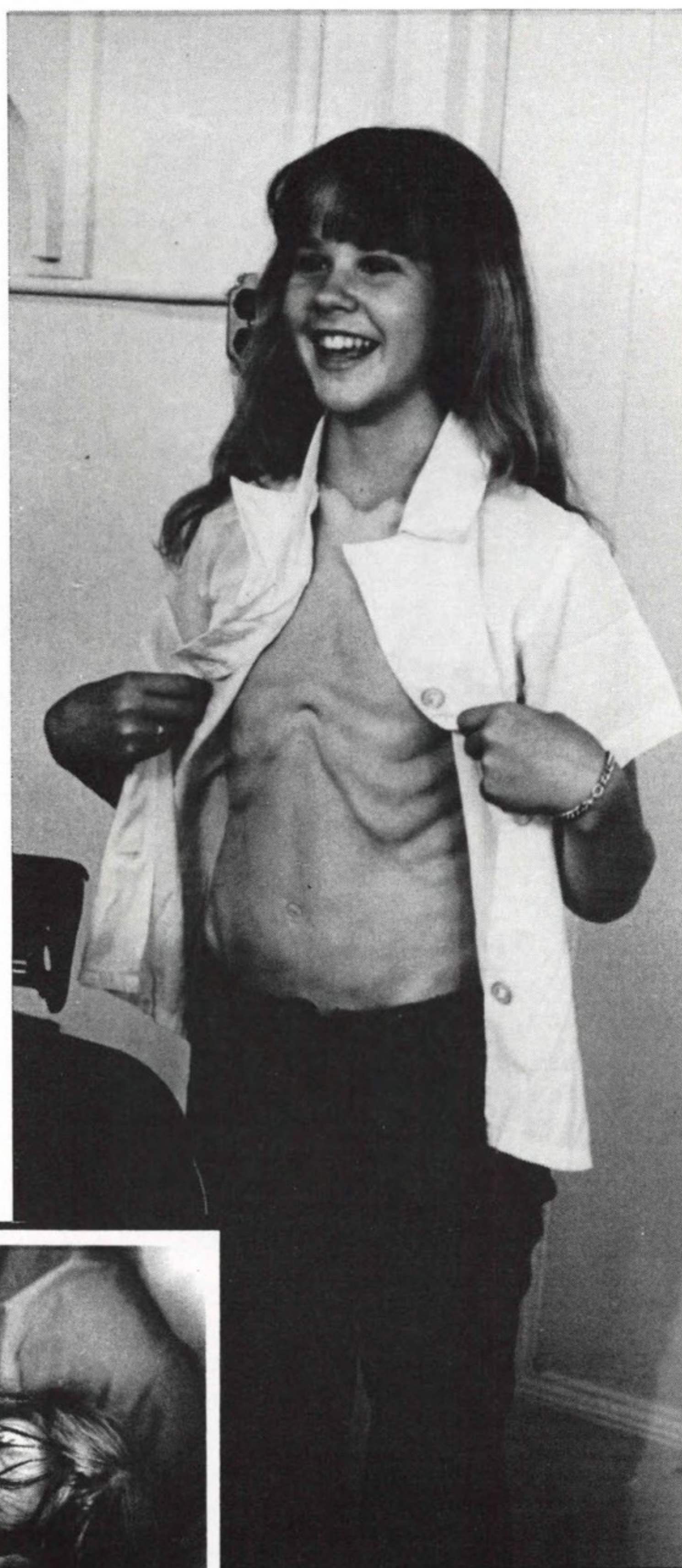
Also removed from this portion of the film was Regan's first medical examination, a loss of weighty import that caused yet another of what Blatty calls the "amazing holes in the carpentry of the story." Numerous stills attest to the existence of this scene, and Blatty confirms that it was present in Friedkin's first fine cut. Friedkin ultimately excised the scene because he believed that audiences would already know Regan's illness to be supernatural, and would be tired and angered by constant 'red herrings' attempting to explain her condition medically.

Friedkin directs Jack MacGowran's last performance as director Burke Dennings. The character of Dennings was allegedly based on British filmmaker J. Lee Thompson.

The scene, listed in the screenplay as Scenes 82-84, opens with a montage showing Regan undergoing various physical examinations, and demonstrating the symptoms of hyperactivity: twitching, twirling, humming. In Dr. Klein's office, Chris is told that her daughter is suffering from a not uncommon nervous disorder which affects adolescents, and is given a prescription for Ritalin—a stimulant which counteracts the effects of depression, to which Regan's condition may be a reaction:

CHRIS:	Depression?
KLEIN:	Well, you mentioned her father... the separation...
CHRIS:	Do you think I should take her to see a psychiatrist?
KLEIN:	Oh, no. I'd wait and see what happens with the Ritalin. I think that's the answer. Wait two or three weeks.

The suggestion that Regan's disorder is a product of depression resulting from her parent's separation is powerfully followed through in Blatty's novel, and perhaps provides a motive for her murder of Burke Dennings—if Regan's condition has been caused by the failure of her parent's marriage, her hostility toward Burke (whom she views as a candidate for her mother's affections) would be entirely understandable. This suggestion remains in Blatty's final script, and recurs during Regan's hypnosis by a psychiatrist. In Blatty's script, the psychiatrist has an extended Q&A exchange with "the person inside of Regan," who answers his inquiries in reverse English ("Yes" becomes "Say," "No" becomes "One"), and reacts violently to the question "Do you blame her [Regan] for her parents' divorce?" None of this appears in the final cut, thus eliminating this 'red herring.' Only the scene in which Regan overhears Chris cursing her father for not calling his daughter on her birthday—which would have followed the scene at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier—remains, and this perhaps serves more significantly to suggest that Regan's increasingly foul vocabulary has been learned from her mother. This is also touched upon in the first medical examination, wherein Chris first learns of her daughter's use of obscenities, as Dr. Klein nervously mentions that Regan let loose a string of expletives during her examination:



Linda Blair models the false, pneumatic "Help Me" torso created by Dick Smith. Inset: The torso speaks.

CHRIS: What did she say? I mean, *specifically*, Doctor.

KLEIN: Well, *specifically*, she advised me to keep my fingers away from her "goddam cunt."

CHRIS: [SHOCKED] She used those words?

KLEIN: She used those words. Look, I doubt she even understood what she was saying.

CHRIS: Yeah, I guess. Maybe not. You don't think a psychiatrist...?

KLEIN: The best explanation is always the simplest one. Let's wait. Let's wait and see. In the meantime, try not to worry.

In the final cut, the scene in which Regan urinates on her mother's carpet during a party includes Chris' immediate apology, "I'm sorry, she's been sick. She didn't know what she was saying." Later, Regan asks Chris what is wrong with her, to which she replies: "It's like the doctor said. It's nerves, honey, that's all. OK? You just take your pills and you'll be fine." Blatty points out that in the current assembly of **THE EXORCIST**, these lines cause confusion, since Friedkin has removed the scene(s) to which they refer. "That's the very first major hole," he asserts. "It's like 'What's the matter, honey? Gotta keep taking those pills.' What pills?! When did she get sick? The last time I saw her, a minute ago, she was giggling and smiling downstairs!"

With the exception of this major blip, Friedkin's removal of what he described as Blatty's other 'red herrings' is relatively seamless. Blatty himself had removed the major subplot—concerning Karl the butler (played by Rudolf Schundler, later the witchcraft authority in Dario Argento's **SUSPIRIA**) and his drugged-out daughter—at Friedkin's request, but a number of residual diversions remain in his final script, which constantly hint that Regan's illness may be psychosomatic. Significantly, the script contains many references to a book on witchcraft which has been brought into the MacNeil house by a seeress, Mary Jo Perrin, who attends Chris' party; the suggestion, explored more fully in the novel, being that Regan may be 'faking' symptoms about which she had read in Mary Jo's books. Friedkin seems to have deleted some dialogue between Mary Jo and Sharon in the editing process, and the dark-haired actress

now remains silent and unidentified in his final cut. (Sharp-eyed viewers can spot her during the party sequence, staring attentively as Chris chats with Father Dyer.) Also removed from the party scene are references to the Black Mass-type desecrations which have taken place in a local Jesuit church, which clearly intrigue Chris.

Another minor, albeit significant, 'gradual onset' detail apparently lost in the editing was a scene at the Baringer clinic, in which a startled nurse observes the letters L and M appearing on Regan's abdomen as she sleeps, clearly prefiguring the appearance of the words 'heLp Me,' which ultimately convince Karras that Regan's possession is genuine. This immediately precedes Chris' interview with the doctors in which they first suggest enlisting the help of an exorcist. According to Blatty's script, the scene (which now begins in-progress) originally opened with the Clinic Director (Peter Masterson) telling Chris: "People with very, very sensitive skin can just trace with a finger and then a little while later it shows up. Not abnormal. Why an "L" and an "M," of course, we don't understand. In the meantime..."

The significance of the "L" and "M" is not too difficult to understand: they are the initials of Father Lankester Merrin (Max von Sydow), the exorcist. It is interesting to note that, although the significance of these letters is wasted on the medical board, the idea of locating an exorcist is communicated to them nonetheless. In the final cut, all mention of the skin lettering has been seamlessly excised, along with its curious epiphany.

The Spider Walking Sequence

A scene which has become legendary amongst fans of **THE EXORCIST** is the bizarre 'spider-walking sequence,' the most notorious of the 'missing scenes.' Ironically, despite its notoriety, this scene has no particular relevance, and was apparently dropped at a very early stage—perhaps even during production. Although shot, the scene was never included in any fine cut assembly of the movie, and its absence is mourned by neither of the film's creators. In the shooting script, it is placed (as in the novel) immediately after the announcement of Burke Denning's death, from a mysterious fall down the Hitchcock stairs that wrenched his head completely around. Chris and Sharon, both shaken by the news of the director's demise, talk quietly in the hall of the MacNeil house, when Regan appears on the staircase 'on all fours, gliding spiderlike, noiselessly and swiftly... her tongue flicking rapidly in and out of her mouth like a snake.'





Linda Blair and the elongated, flickering tongue used in the film's notorious, excised "spider-walking" scene. It appears briefly in the final cut, during the exorcism.

Marcel Vercoutere, the film's mechanical effects designer, once recounted his memory of this scene: "It was all filmed. Maybe Friedkin felt it was too heavy. [Regan] gets out of bed, [goes] to the top of the stairs, and turns upside down. And then runs down the stairs on her hands and legs—upside down! All the way down the stairs. Then she runs into an alcove and bites [Sharon] on the leg. I built a gag that was on the same level as the staircase, coming down. Then I rigged her up with a belt and two fine piano wires, so she could turn over. When she started at the top I could go down at the same level as she was. So actually, the only thing she did was move her arms and legs; I could make her move at any speed I wanted to. As soon as I got her down at the bottom, I released her. I think it was too much. Friedkin didn't know how far to take it. Besides, that scene was kind of bloody... Blood was running down all over [Regan's] face, because she [had bitten this woman and] was upside down at the time. Besides,

Linda Blair appears in the wickedest of Dick Smith's early, rejected possession makeup designs.

I think that would've clinched it for the audience that she was possessed... Friedkin wanted to keep the audience guessing."¹

Interestingly, despite Vercoutere's claim that this scene was "kinda bloody," Blatty's script calls simply for Regan to lick, rather than bite, Sharon's ankle; the decision to make the assault more violent must have been made at a later stage. Whatever the chronology of events, the scene was rejected, and the film works much better with Chris MacNeil comprehending the truth of Burke's death only when her daughter's head pivots 180° and she cackles in his belligerent voice, "Do you know what she did, your cunting daughter?"

Nothing Below the Waist

"The juxtaposition of two elements which just don't come together in the human computer—the vagina and the crucifix—*that's* the film's most shocking contribution," William Friedkin has declared.² Blatty, however, asserts that, as it currently appears, the 'crucifix masturbation' scene is *not* to his liking, and stresses that he had intended it to be filmed very



Chris and Father Merrin get acquainted. Though present in the novel, the scene appears in neither the film or its shooting script!

differently. "I personally had always thought it would be shot much more by suggestion," he says. "I wanted to see nothing below the girl's chest. I wanted the crucifix to go below the frame, out of the shot, and to come back up with blood on it, and let the kid tell us where it has been, without showing the thighs or whatever. We had the footage. I don't want to be critical, but that was my taste."

The final script supports Blatty's claims, containing the following instructions. "The CAMERA GOES TO BED disclosing Regan sitting up in a SIDE VIEW TO CAMERA, her legs propped wide apart and the bone-white crucifix clutched in raw-knuckled hands that are upraised over her head. She seems to be exerting a powerful effort to keep the crucifix UP, away from her vagina which we cannot (AND WILL NOT) see, her nightgown pulled up to precisely that point... The crucifix is plunged down and *out of sight* at Regan's vagina. The demonic face looks down and we HEAR Regan-Demon roaring in that coarse deafening voice as the crucifix is repeatedly brought up and plunged down again, blood now spotting it as:

DEMON: Yes, now you're *mine*, you stinking cow! You're *mine*, you're *Mine*, you're —

Interestingly, this script calls for the young actress to utter only such cries as "Do it, stinking bitch! You'll do it! You'll do it or I'm going to kill you!" and omits the line ("Let Jesus fuck you!") which is present, in both novel and finished film. Indeed it appears that, in writing his script, Blatty was initially hesitant about the use of obscenities (particularly those to be uttered by a child), and changes were made to his script during shooting, presumably at Friedkin's behest.

Blatty recalls an incident in which Father John Nicola, one of the film's technical advisors, suggested that the language lacked authenticity. At Friedkin's request, Blatty penned various 'horrendous obscenities' for the director to insert at will. The most notorious of these is "Stick your cock up her

ass, you motherfucking worthless cocksucker!" with which Regan greets Father Merrin.

The script also vouches that Blatty did not intend for Regan's neck to demonstrate the peculiarly elastic abilities for which it has become famed. Although in the novel, Chris thinks she sees Regan's head 'turning around on a motionless torso... until at last it seemed facing backwards,' the script merely announces 'The Regan-Demon thing abruptly looks over her shoulder at CAMERA (and Chris).' Similarly, during the exorcism sequence, Regan's head is shown turning a complete 360° (although a cutaway to Father Karras suggests this could be hallucinatory), while Blatty's script merely announces that "a fraction at a time, Regan's head turns toward [Karras], swivelling like a mannequin's and creaking with the sound of a rusted mechanism.'

"I argued strenuously against the shot which suggested that Regan's head had swivelled around full circle," says Blatty. "I argued that the head would fall off and there would be a lot of blood. I told Billy, 'Supernatural doesn't mean impossible,' but the audience absolutely loved it." (Friedkin was careful to temper the impossibility of the feat, in both its instances, with cutaway shots of its witnesses, suggesting that it could be hallucinated.)

Despite audience approval, Blatty remains unhappy about this scene, as he does about the gaudy 'crucifix masturbation' scene, in which a brief insert shows the hand of Eileen Dietz driving the crucifix under her nightgown, toward her vagina. "But God knows, a large section of the audience probably came because something that shocking and vulgar could be seen on the American screen in an R-rated film," sighs Blatty. "Billy Friedkin always said that would be the case; that they would come to see the little girl masturbate with the crucifix. And unfortunately, to a large extent, he was right. At the time I didn't believe it; I thought he was destroying the film doing that but, when I perceived that he was absolutely right, I thought it was terribly depressing."

It is worth noting that the domestic TV version of **THE EXORCIST** removes the crucifix scene, which Blatty describes as "so sanitized that I must tell you, frankly, it's a bore. Billy Friedkin reshot the desecrated statue [a mildly blood-spattered Madonna] in a long shot, so that you can hardly see it. He did that at the request of Warner Bros. Television, quite some time after we'd finished shooting. And of course the language and obscenity is missing so you lose all the bite and the sense of gritty reality, leaving a sort of Salem, Massachusetts situation. But of course, something which it *doesn't* terribly distress me to lose is Regan MacNeil and the crucifix." Trivia fans may also be interested to know that Friedkin

himself redubbed the possessed Regan's profanities for TV, passably imitating such Mercedes McCambridge lines as "Your mother sucks cocks in Hell!" with safer variations like "Your mother still rots in Hell."

Stairway to Heaven

Perhaps the most important of the scenes removed by Friedkin was a low-key exchange between Father Karras and Father Merrin, which takes place on the MacNeil staircase during a brief moment of respite from the exorcism.

In this explicitly theological exchange, the two men discuss the reason behind Regan's possession. Blatty describes this exchange as "crucial" and strenuously contested its excision. In his first draft screenplay, this scene consists of some 23 lines of dialogue³ but was cut down to 9 lines in the final script. Blatty reports that those 9 lines were subsequently reduced even further but, at the insistence of Max von Sydow, were given wider berth, creating a mid-way version. The transcripts below show both the first draft and the final script versions, illustrating how the scene was altered. Dialogue featured identically in both versions is presented in bold.

FIRST DRAFT

KARRAS: **If that's the Devil, why this girl?**

MERRIN: Who can know? Who can really hope to know? Yet I think—the demon's target is not the possessed; it is us... the observers... every person in this house. And I think—I think **the point is to make us despair; to reject our own humanity, Damien; to see ourselves as ultimately bestial; as ultimately vile and putrescent; without dignity—ugly—unworthy. And there lies the heart of it, perhaps; in unworthiness. For I think belief in God is not a matter of reason at all. I think it is finally a matter of love; of accepting the possibility that God could love us...**

FINAL SCRIPT

KARRAS: Father, what's going on in there? What is it? **If that's the Devil, why this girl?** It makes no sense.

MERRIN: **I think the point is to make us despair, Damien; to see ourselves as animal and ugly—to reject our own humanity—to reject the possibility that God could ever love us.**



William Friedkin (wearing a well-insulated coat) directs Max von Sydow and Linda Blair on the refrigerated bedroom set.

In Blatty's first draft, Merrin goes on to explain that once a demon has been exorcised, it never returns to repossess its former host. (John Boorman and Linda Blair... take note!) This is not mentioned in the final script. Although Blatty describes this scene as crucial, it was not included in the fine cut he favors. "That first cut that Bill Friedkin ran for me did *not* contain the exchange between Karras and Merrin on the staircase," he confirms.

Friedkin is clear and outspoken in his reasons for omitting the scene: "I threw that scene out because it was overstated," he declares. "The whole movie was about what they were talking about, so why are they talking about it? This was the equivalent of the scene I hate that ends **PSYCHO**. Blatty's feeling was that he had to have his characters explain the picture to the audience. That's where he and I differ. I felt that the audience should fill in everything for themselves; we shouldn't have to spell things out for them."

In the End, As It Was In the Beginning

THE EXORCIST's final confrontation between Karras and the demon, Pazuzu, has been so widely

misinterpreted as to suggest that spelling may not always be undesirable as a cinematic device. Karras invites the demon to inhabit him so that he may kill himself, its host, and end the possession; the demon does *not* emerge victorious by hurling the priest out the window.

However, a further intriguing twist was brought to these events in the final script by the arrival of Detective Kinderman at the MacNeil house, at precisely the moment Karras discovers the corpse of Father Merrin. In their engrossing work **THE STORY BEHIND THE EXORCIST** (Signet paperback, 1974), Peter Travers and Stephanie Reiff quote Blatty on the scene: "I've written a new scene where, in the middle of the exorcism, just as it looks like some headway is being made, Kinderman knocks on the door with a warrant for the little girl's arrest. We are taking that scene and putting it in just as Karras is walking back up the stairs to find Merrin dead in the girl's room. Then we show Chris downstairs delaying Kinderman. The upshot is that if she had not delayed him, Karras might not have died. At that moment, Kinderman, in an odd way, represents the problem of evil because he is interrupting the exorcism and would put Regan in an institution. This is evil in spite of itself, and a greater evil because, had Kinderman



Regan genuflects to a vision of Pazuzu in her room. Eileen Dietz doubled Linda Blair in this famous shot, wearing a body stocking under her nightgown to approximate Blair's adolescent figure.

interrupted, Karras would not have had his salvation." (p. 120)

Although the cutaways to Kinderman were scripted and apparently shot, they were drastically reduced by Friedkin in the editing. In the final cut, we merely see Chris opening the door to Kinderman. The following dialogue between them is missing:

KINDERMAN:	Look, I'm sorry to disturb you at this hour of the night, but I'm afraid that I'm going to have to talk to your daughter, Mrs. MacNeil. And I'd like to take a look at her room, if you don't mind.
CHRIS:	Regan's bedroom?
KINDERMAN:	Yes, immediately, please. I have a warrant.
CHRIS:	Oh, please, not now! She's gotten worse, Lieutenant. Please! Please, not now!

In Blatty's original script, two of Regan's schoolmates also come calling, and ask Karras whether

she has returned from the hospital yet. While Karras talks with the young girls on the steps of the house, Merrin is (presumably) dying in the bedroom. In this version, as in the novel, the exorcism lasts over two days, and thus the final confrontation occurs at dusk — not in the middle of the night, as it does in the film.

Most significantly, a parting exchange between Father Dyer and Chris regarding the nature of evil was dropped with Blatty's consent when Ellen Burstyn demonstrated problems with the scene. This scene appears in both the novel and script:

DYER:	What do <i>you</i> think happened. Do you think she was really possessed?
CHRIS:	Oh, yeah, you bet I do. I mean, if you're asking if I believe in the Devil, the answer is yes — yeah, that I believe.
DYER:	But if all the evil in the world makes you believe that there might be a Devil, then how do you account for all the good?

"I refused to say the words 'I believe in the Devil,'" Burstyn explained to Travers and Reiff. "So that was



changed a little. Even then, it didn't work; the scene was too preachy." Blatty grudgingly allowed that the scene was a 'showstopper' (in the negative sense that it halted the action) and it was never shot. Nevertheless, Blatty clearly found the exchange significant, and determined that it should reach the screen in some form. In 1966, an earlier version of this exchange had surfaced in Blatty's novel *TWINKLE, TWINKLE KILLER KANE*, in which the seemingly deranged Manfred Cutshaw tells Colonel Hudson Kane that Satan constantly advertises his presence. "Old men stabbed in a subway for laughs! A teenage kid kills his parents with a shotgun! A father heaves his baby against a wall, crushes his head, because the kid wet his bed! Three kids from wealthy families kill a fisherman for his rowboat! Shall I go on? Shall I talk about war? Isn't that some kind of possession? And what of the million ways and tools devised to torture a man 'til he screams! Sometimes for kicks, Hud, just for kicks! Man, I believe! I believe in possession! I believe because devils keep doing commercials!" In his greatly underrated film adaptation of *KANE—THE NINTH CONFIGURATION* (1979)—Blatty reworks this argument once again. "I don't belong to the 'God is alive and well and hiding in Argentina' club," raves Cutshaw (Scott Wilson). "But I believe in the Devil, alright. You know why? Because the prick keeps doing commercials." Later, in an eerie echo of Father Dyer's missing conclusive words, Hudson Kane (Stacy Keach) observes "You're convinced that God is dead because of all the evil in the world. Then why don't you think he's alive because of the goodness in the world?"

There are indeed a number of incidental lines which Blatty had wanted in the screen version of *THE EXORCIST* and which, having been cut, resurfaced in his later films. Blatty's original *EXORCIST* script contains a humorous aside by Father Dyer (present in the novel) in which he asks Damien Karras if he has any lemon-drops. "I once spent a year hearing children's confessions, and I wound-up a lemon drop junkie. I got hooked. The little bastards keep breathing it on you along with all that pot. Between the two, I've got a feeling it's probably addictive." By the time the shooting script had been finalized, these lines had disappeared; they can be heard, however, in *THE EXORCIST III* as Father Dyer (Ed Flanders) buys candy at a cinema concession stand.

Blatty's final *EXORCIST* script also contains a jokey interlude in which Kinderman tells Karras: "The entrance exam for policemen, Father? When I

took it, one question went something like 'What are rabies and what would you do for them?' Know what some dumbhead put down for an answer? 'Rabies' he said, 'are Jew priests, and I would do anything I could for them.'" This anecdote was cut during the shooting, but re-emerges in *THE EXORCIST III*, wherein Kinderman (George C. Scott) accuses Ryan of having been the offending dumb-head. Also present in the *EXORCIST* shooting script but absent from the film, is the demon's line "She [Regan] is in here with us. We are legion." This is transmuted in *THE EXORCIST III* into a haunting refrain, as Patient X (Brad Dourif) tells Kinderman "He [Karras] is inside with us!"

Another significant echo involves Regan's challenge to Father Merrin—"This time you're going to lose!"—which was also deleted by Friedkin, the director preferring the demon to be silent until the commencement of the exorcism. Blatty felt that the removal of this line made unclear the subtext that Regan's possession is 'a set-up,' and that the demon's target all along was Merrin, who had fought (and defeated) Pazuzu once before in Africa. Nevertheless, the deleted line re-appears in *THE EXORCIST III*, wherein the demonically infested body of Damien Karras tells Father Morning (Nicol Williamson) "This time you're going to lose." This powerful line was picked up on by the publicists, and became one of the key slogans in the trailer for Blatty's sequel.

Also filmed was a controversial and sentimental final exchange between Kinderman and Dyer (which is present in the novel) in which it was suggested that Karras' spirit somehow lived on through the blossoming friendship of policeman and priest. Echoing Kinderman's earlier conversation with Karras, this scene provided what Blatty perceived as an uplifting closure, and was intended to occur immediately after what is now the film's final shot, of Dyer gazing down the steps that represent his friend's fall into Grace:

KINDERMAN:	I've got a pass for the 'Crest' tomorrow night. You'd like to go?
DYER:	What's playing?
KINDERMAN:	Wuthering Heights.
DYER:	Who's in it?
KINDERMAN:	Heathcliffe, Jackie Gleason. And in the role of Catherine Earnshaw, Lucille Ball.
DYER:	I've seen it.
KINDERMAN:	Another one.

Kinderman steps up to the sidewalk, hooks an arm through Dyer's and slowly starts walking down the street.

Father Merrin (Max von Sydow) is summoned to Georgetown to preside over the exorcism. The scene appears in the film only in longshot.

Shades of **CASABLANCA**.

According to Blatty, this ending was included in his preferred version, but was removed by Friedkin at the urging of Warners executive John Calley. Certainly, Friedkin well remembers this ending, but asserts that the decision to remove the scene was his own, because he considered it an unnecessary tack-on. "There's an ending that we shot that's right out of the novel," he says, "which ends with a conversation between Kinderman and Dyer walking away from the site of Karras' fall. They have a long conversation about movies, and good and evil, and then the book ends with the last lines from **CASABLANCA**. I shot that ending and it was no fucking good at all. It was so anti-climactic after this picture! I never previewed **THE EXORCIST** with an audience. I just looked at it and said 'Take this fucking scene out!' So we ended with Father Dyer turning away on the stairs, which seemed to me to be enough—get off stage! The missing footage ran maybe three minutes, but it was three minutes of Death on the screen. I think it worked very well in the novel, as a sort of nostalgic and upbeat ending, and I filmed it—but I didn't like it."

Despite Friedkin's dismissal of the original ending, it appears that some time after **THE EXORCIST** had opened, he became concerned that people were misinterpreting the film's final moments as negative, and approached Warners for permission to recall and re-edit the prints currently in circulation. Although Friedkin is now evasive about this unusual turn of events, he made the following announcement at a lecture held at the University of Georgia on January 23, 1974: "The other night I was lying around in a half-dazed state of mind, fighting sleep, and I had this vision of a new ending for the film. What we're going to do is add a new ending to all presently released theatrical prints, and to all those released later on. Had I thought of it at the time, I would have shot [this ending] and put it in. I'm going back to Georgetown to do it. Nothing will be taken out; it will not be cut. This will be an addition to the present ending that will blow your minds. Those of you who have seen the film, when you see what we add to the ending, are going to be blitzed—fired! It's really strong... As to how long the addition will be: I'm adding less than fifteen seconds. But that fifteen seconds... will have the impact of the whole picture."⁴

Nat Segaloff has suggested that this proposed 15s ending comprised a scene in which Father Dyer walks down the Hitchcock steps beside the MacNeil house, and momentarily sees Karras ascending the stairs toward him, signalling his salvation. Blatty denies any knowledge of this ending ("I don't know

what that's about at all"), but recounts his own desired 'alternative ending' in which Father Dyer, having become saddened and withdrawn since Karras' death, walks through Georgetown and encounters a jogger. As the two men talk, the voice of the jogger gradually transmutes into the voice of Damien Karras, who asks 'Don't you know me, Joe?' This startling ending echoes a passage from Luke's Gospel [24, 15-32] in which the resurrected Christ encounters two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Keeping his identity undisclosed, Christ asks why the disciples are sad, and engages them in lengthy theological conversation, before revealing his identity. Blatty describes the nature of the jogger's conversation with Dyer as "about the problem of evil" and explains that, as Dyer recognizes his lost friend, he notices that the sky is full of lights as we hear Karras' voice saying "We are the light." Indeed, this final line provides the basis for **LEGION**, in which Blatty suggests that the material world is indeed Lucifer himself, the fallen angel crawling his way back to perfection—"Lucifer" means 'the light bearer'—and God set the material world in motion with the words 'Let there be light.'

"I loved that ending, and Billy loved it," remembers Blatty fondly. "And we were all set to shoot it, and the studio talked him out of it. Friedkin and I had agreed that we were going to shoot a new ending and restore all of the missing footage. This was several years later, when Billy was relaxed by the sure knowledge that the film was a hit, which he didn't know before, as he quite candidly told me. I wrote the ending, he adored it..."

Friedkin dismissed this claim, and denies all knowledge of the ending which he is supposed to have adored. "That's not true at all," he insists, "I never heard of that ending." Yet Blatty remains adamant that *all* the relevant parties had agreed to film the new ending, including Jason Miller and the Rev. William O'Malley, who played Father Dyer. "William O'Malley was a dear friend, and both he and Jason—and indeed Billy [Friedkin]—were ready," Blatty insists. "And somebody talked him out of it. John Calley, the same person who talked him out of the original ending between Dyer and Kinderman."

The Sequels

All three **EXORCIST** movies have suffered from problematic endings, and each has been extensively reworked. John Boorman's **EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC** (1977) was recut by the director a few days after its initial release, because audiences were howling with laughter. Believing the problem to be



George C. Scott and William Peter Blatty during the troubled filming of THE EXORCIST III (1990).

the ending, wherein both Father Lamont (Richard Burton) and Regan MacNeil emerge unscathed and apparently united from the devastated MacNeil house, Boorman hastily reshot the last moments, allowing only Regan to survive. The change made no difference; the movie was still booed out of theaters.

"I had to pay three dollars to see it because they were afraid to show it to me," Blatty says of **EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC**. "I was the first to laugh out loud, and that got the audience into the spirit. I had read the script, which was pirated, and I circled the spot and showed it to my wife where they were going to go up. I'll never forget it. It's where Louise Fletcher puts the helmet on her head and says, 'Now, Regan...!' Mind you, prior to that time I had indulged in a little bit of giggling, and obviously the people all around me didn't know who I was, but had come determined to be frightened and quite respectful. And whatever their perceptions were, they gave the film the benefit of the doubt. But, by the time we got to Louise and the helmet... Oh dear, oh dear."

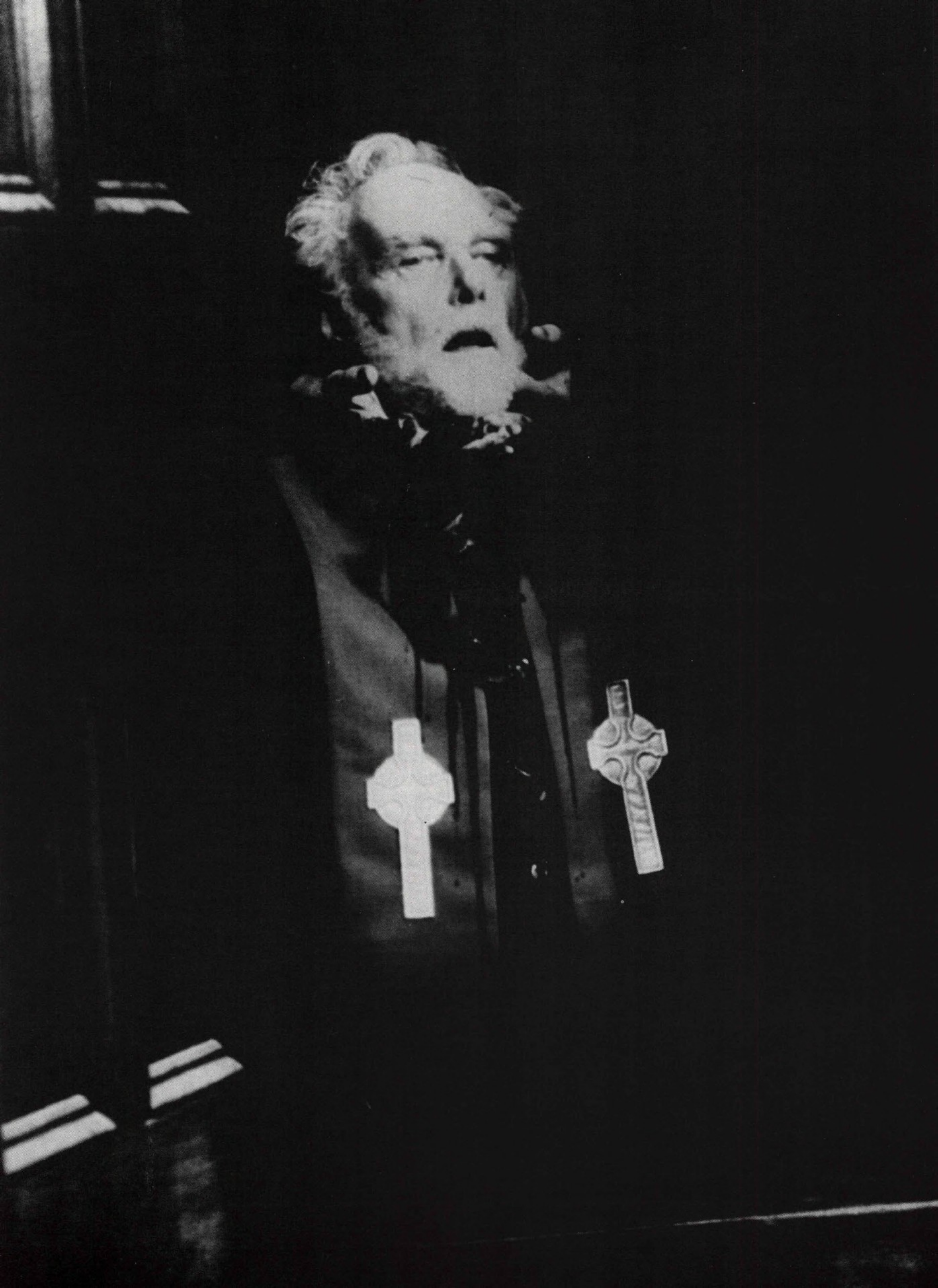
Friedkin's judgment of the film he calls "THE HAIRY TIT" is equally damning. "When it came out, the studio invited me to look at it and I went over to Technicolor to see one of the first prints. After the first 15 minutes, I had to get up and leave. That is

really a dumb movie. The 15 minutes I saw are the product of a demented mind."

Last year, Blatty was hired by the producers Morgan Creek to adapt his novel **LEGION** for the screen, and once again found himself battling to preserve his original ending. Retitled **THE EXORCIST III** (a name which Blatty fought right up to the end), the film was initially conceived as a psychological chiller which eschewed spectacular effects in favor of understatedly haunting dialogue. Yet Blatty's resolutely low-key, high-brow intentions were ultimately overridden by Morgan Creek, who persuaded him to trowel-on a highly orchestrated, strangely incongruous, effects-laden finale, wherein Father Morning attempts to exorcise a murderous demon from the undead body of Father Karras. Despite the impressive theatricality of this stylish showdown between Good and Evil, Blatty remains ambivalent about its artistic validity.

"The problems really come back to one man, the sole owner of Morgan Creek, who said that there had to be an exorcism in a film with the word **EXORCIST** in the title," explains Blatty. "And I resisted that ending because I felt it would immediately be compared to the original, and you can't top the original."

LEGION itself ends quietly and ambiguously, with



the spontaneous death of the mysterious asylum inmate who may or may not be responsible for the grisly dismemberments plaguing Georgetown. In his original screenplay, Blatty retained this unresolved tension, but was unable to find a studio willing to back his project—until he came up with a more visually dramatic climax in which Kinderman murders (perhaps saving) the deranged Patient X. “The original script ended just as the novel does,” remembers Blatty. “Then, after three or more years of not being able to persuade anyone to make the film, even though I had Friedkin enlisted to direct at the time, I was sitting in a kitchen in Greenwich, Connecticut. I suddenly came upon this vision of what was going to happen at the end of the script... all of it... the whole tie-up with Karras, everything leading up to the execution with Kinderman at the end. And I knew I wanted *that* to be the ending.”

The project subsequently found support, despite the absence of special effects from the script. “No, no, there was not a single special effect,” Blatty asserts forcefully, “except for the scene in which Mrs. Clelia crawls across the ceiling. It’s curious, because some younger audiences giggle at that, while more mature audiences find it very creepy and terrifying; it’s just so unsettling.” However, when rough cuts were viewed by Morgan Creek executives, it was decided that a more spectacular climax had to be inserted. Although impressive, this finale seriously undercuts the restrained tone achieved by the rest of the movie. Blatty agrees: “I don’t do battle scenes, and I don’t do exorcisms,” he admits. “There have been a thousand exorcisms since the original—what’s in there that is fresh and new? However, to give the devil his due, there is probably a certain roundness to the action that was achieved by resorting to that exorcism, which may have been lacking in my original. By God, you should have heard some of the endings that were suggested. One gentleman (who shall remain nameless) said that Kinderman didn’t look smart enough and, to remedy this, I should reverse the dialogue in the scene where Kinderman interviews the president of Georgetown University, giving Kinderman all the answers!”

Though Blatty conceded to the demands for a graphically gory exorcism, he steadfastly refused to give an inch when it came to portraying the devilish murders of *LEGION* onscreen, relying instead upon

the power of suggestion. “There was actually a brief shot of the decapitated priest, holding his head in his lap, which we filmed,” Blatty candidly admits, “the purpose of which was to give you, almost subliminally, a flashing insight into the real horror of the killer’s mind. But we never used it. What happened was, at the time we were filming this scene, I was asked if I planned to do a zoom and I said, ‘Of course.’ Then I deliberately *didn’t* because, if I had done the zoom, there is no question that it would have been used in the film, and we would have had a close-up of this decapitated head, and it was simply against my religion to do that. As evidence of my own fallibility, I must confess that, later on, I felt moments of yearning for that shot. With some prodding from the studio, I commissioned an optical to push the shot in closer, but it was grainy and awful and unusable, and at the end I felt relieved. I never wanted the scene in the first place.”

Blatty reports that, despite his current denials, Friedkin was initially enthusiastic about *THE EXORCIST III*, and was at various times enlisted to direct. “It was on and off a thousand times,” Blatty says. “We were set to collaborate with Warners many years ago on *LEGION*, and we fell apart on the very night before the big meeting. Billy suddenly decided he didn’t want to work with Jason Miller again, didn’t want to do anything involving decapitations... I don’t know, there were a million excuses. It disappointed me very much at the time, although he was going off in some very bizarre areas. He wanted to open the film with an aerial shot of some mutilated cattle—I don’t know what the hell that had to do with anything. A few years later, we came together again on it for the Weintraub Organization, but we couldn’t agree on the script. First he loved the script, then as soon as I was signed, Billy suddenly wanted changes which I refused to make.

“Well, look, I don’t want to appear unreasonable or uncollaborative, so I’m going to tell you one of Billy’s proposals: it was that the story should center not on *LEGION*, but should be an independent entity, in which *Linda Blair gives birth to twins who are possessed!* He rang me up and said ‘Now listen, don’t get mad, this is just for example, I’m not saying necessarily this has to be it. But *suppose* Linda Blair has twins and they’re possessed.’ And I just said ‘I don’t think so, Bill. I don’t think so at all.’”

Friedkin denies ever having made such a suggestion. “That is 100% false,” he declares. “I have never had such an idea. It sounds to me the most *hare-brained* idea I’ve ever heard. And you should know that Bill [Blatty], whom I admire greatly, is quite often given to hyperbole, if not outright invention. As far as *THE EXORCIST III* is concerned, I

Father Kanavan (Harry Carey Jr.) is found decapitated in his confessional. Blatty withdrew this shot from THE EXORCIST III for religious reasons.

haven't seen it, but I was familiar with the script for many years and it was just of no interest to me, and isn't really of interest for me to see. I never really collaborated on it; I read Blatty's script and I never thought it was valid — what can I say? To be honest, I'm not really interested in doing a sequel of anything anyway."

Epilogue In Remembering They Were Trying to Forget

"From the cab stepped an old man. Black raincoat and hat and battered valise. He paid the driver, then turned and stood motionless, staring at the house... As [Kinderman] turned the corner, he noticed that the tall old man hadn't moved, but was standing under streetlight glow in mist, like a melancholy traveller frozen in time."

— William Peter Blatty
THE EXORCIST

Perhaps the most memorable image from **THE EXORCIST** is that of the shadowy lone figure of Father Merrin, arriving outside the house on Prospect Street, gazing up at the unearthly light from Regan MacNeil's bedroom window, illuminating the night fog in a phosphorescent haze. Although credited by many as Friedkin's invention, this haunting frieze (which was to become the single iconic image from **THE EXORCIST**) is in fact foreshadowed in Blatty's novel and subsequent screenplays. Adding his own unique cinematic edge to the writer's prose, Friedkin visually realized this sublime moment with aplomb, capturing perfectly in this composition the haunting and paradoxical power of Blatty's tale.

In a neat reversal of narrative conventions, Father Merrin (the messenger of Good) is depicted as a dark, brooding presence, apparently threatening the brightly lit house at whose gate he stands. The iconography here is, of course, back to front, for the source of light is the seat of evil, Regan's bedroom, reminding one of Lucifer's designation as "the bringer of light." Indeed, the very title of Blatty's novel is in itself a reversal of a well-established horror tradition, in which the eponymous character is more usually the monster: **DRACULA**, **THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON**, even **ROSEMARY'S BABY**.

It is this unresolved, paradoxical power which characterizes Blatty's novel, rendering it less an exercise in terror than a discussion of doubts, and ultimately a reaffirmation of faith. It is not Regan MacNeil about whom we are reading in Blatty's novel — as Merrin points out to Karras during their exchange on the staircase, it is everyone else: the priests, the mother, the servants — even we, the observers.

If Friedkin's film can be said to diverge from the core of Blatty's original vision, it is perhaps in shifting our attention back to Regan herself, away from incidental characters. Blatty's assertions of an original, "more fully fleshed" cut of **THE EXORCIST** seem to suggest that this shift occurred when certain scenes, which did not directly forward the action, were cut in an attempt to lock-down a more commercially viable two-hour running time.

But would the reinsertion of these scenes (if they indeed exist) make **THE EXORCIST** a better film? Certainly, as described by William Peter Blatty, that elusive first cut would have contained many lulls in its tempo — slow, ponderous moments during which the audience, hungry for thrills, may have grown bored or disconnected. In cutting those scenes, William Friedkin surely tightened the pace of **THE EXORCIST**, producing a flawless, roller-coaster ride whose relentless momentum never allows the audience time to stop and think as it propelled them headlong into a nightmarish world of demons and disaster.

This, in itself, is a triumphant cinematic feat, and Friedkin is to be lauded for transforming Blatty's novel into a film of awesome credibility, whose extraordinary verisimilitude has continued to engross movie-goers for almost two decades. One can only be tantalized by Blatty's claim that the original version was even better — that Friedkin's economic direction and pacing were not damaged, but actually enhanced by the presence of those explicitly theological and philosophical scenes.

Such a notion is, to borrow a line from **THE EXORCIST**'s advertising copy, almost beyond comprehension.

NOTES

- ¹ Interview with Scott Bosco, *FANGORIA* #31.
- ² Interview with Lee Goldberg, *FANGORIA* #60.
- ³ Blatty, *ON THE EXORCIST*; pgs. 240-241.
- ⁴ Quoted in *CASTLE OF FRANKENSTEIN* #22, p. 56.





Biblio Watchdog

Confessions of a Trash-Film King

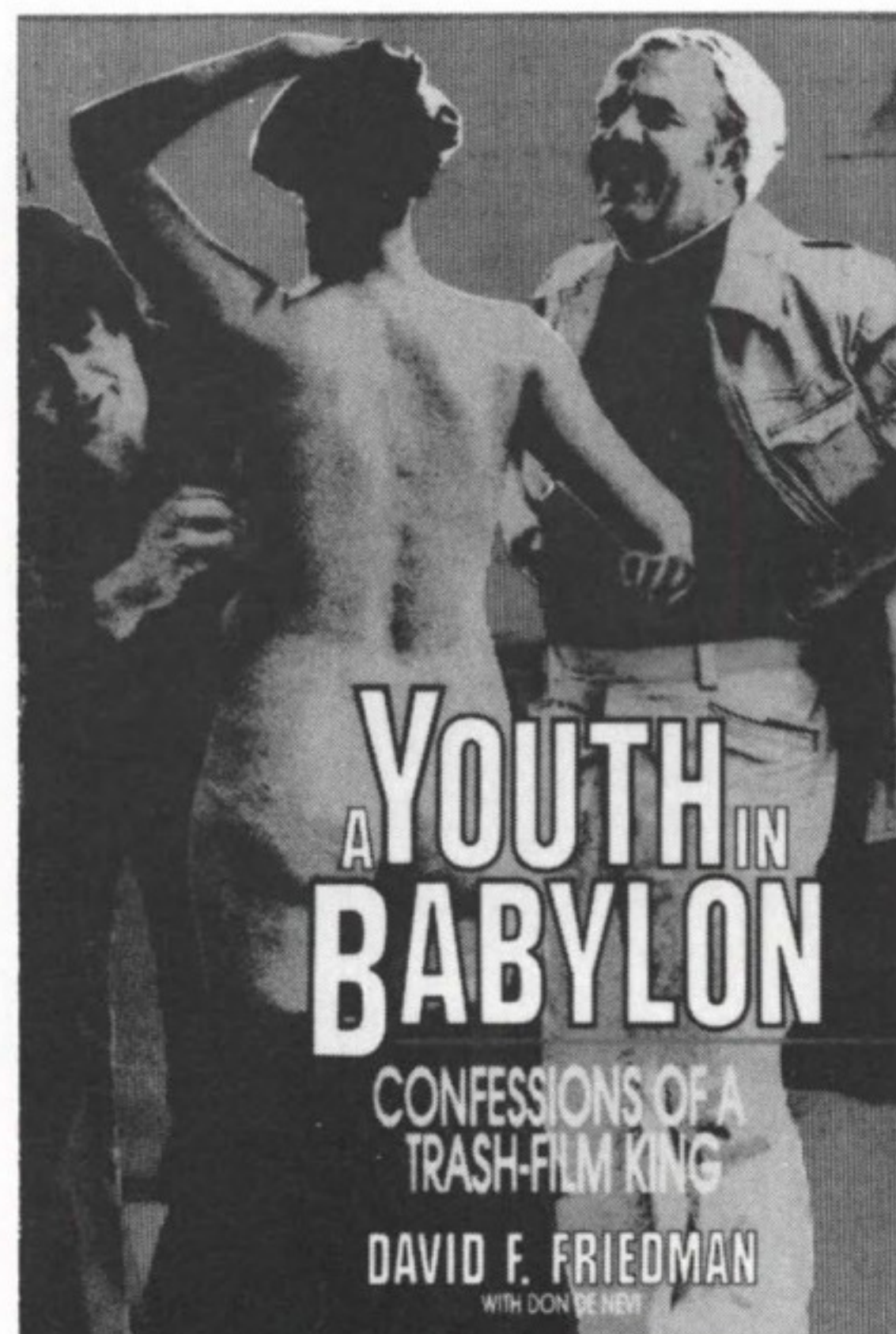
A YOUTH IN BABYLON

David F. Friedman with Don De Nevi
Prometheus Books, 355 pages, \$19.95

Reviewed by Tim Lucas

I'VE SEEN ONLY A FEW of David Friedman's productions, but enough to shape an opinion. **SHE FREAK** (1966) has the distinction of being the film that, after nearly thirty years of insatiable horror film fanaticism, finally and forever killed my completist instinct. Friedman listed himself as writer, producer and director of **THE LONG, SWIFT SWORD OF SIEGFRIED** (aka **MAIDENQUEST**, 1971), actually a US/West German co-production directed by Adrian Hoven, a name conspicuous in its absence from domestic prints. Friedman later removed his own name from **ILSA—SHE-WOLF OF THE S.S.** (1974) which, ironically, remains one of his best-produced films. As for the infamous movies he made with Herschell Gordon Lewis—**BLOOD FEAST** (1963), **TWO THOUSAND MANIACS!** (1964), and **COLOR ME BLOOD RED** (1965)—it's helpful to approach these curiosities with the knowledge this memoir provides of Friedman's life-long affinity for circuses and carnivals; this "Gore Trilogy" was made for the big screen, but would make more sense in a tent.

With these clammy credits preceding him, one doesn't expect a Friedman autobiography to be a work of particularly high quality, but the proof, so to speak, is in the peddling. **A YOUTH IN BABYLON** is good enough to transcend even the greatest expectations; it is supremely well-written, and as significant and truthful a portrait of the groundbreaking days of exploitation filmmaking as the mainstream press is ever likely to make public.



It should be cautioned, nonetheless, that no one should buy **A YOUTH IN BABYLON** with the aim of learning more about movies; this would be like buying a book about the music of Elvis Presley to learn more about Colonel Tom Parker. This craven chronicle of the Croesian and the cash-happy is written strictly, staunchly, and unabashedly from a producer's standpoint. Friedman knows the name of the studio that produced **DINNER AT EIGHT** and the year it was released but, beyond that, the reader is hard-pressed to find any genuine caring for the artform that makes the commerce possible. Friedman has a zesty zealotry, however, for matters of personality, money, and salesmanship (in that probable order), a quality which makes **A YOUTH IN BABYLON** far less significant as an autobiography than as a mountainous monument to his mesmerizing mentor: "America's Fearless Young Showman," Kroger Babb—the proud pontificating papa of Hygienic Productions.

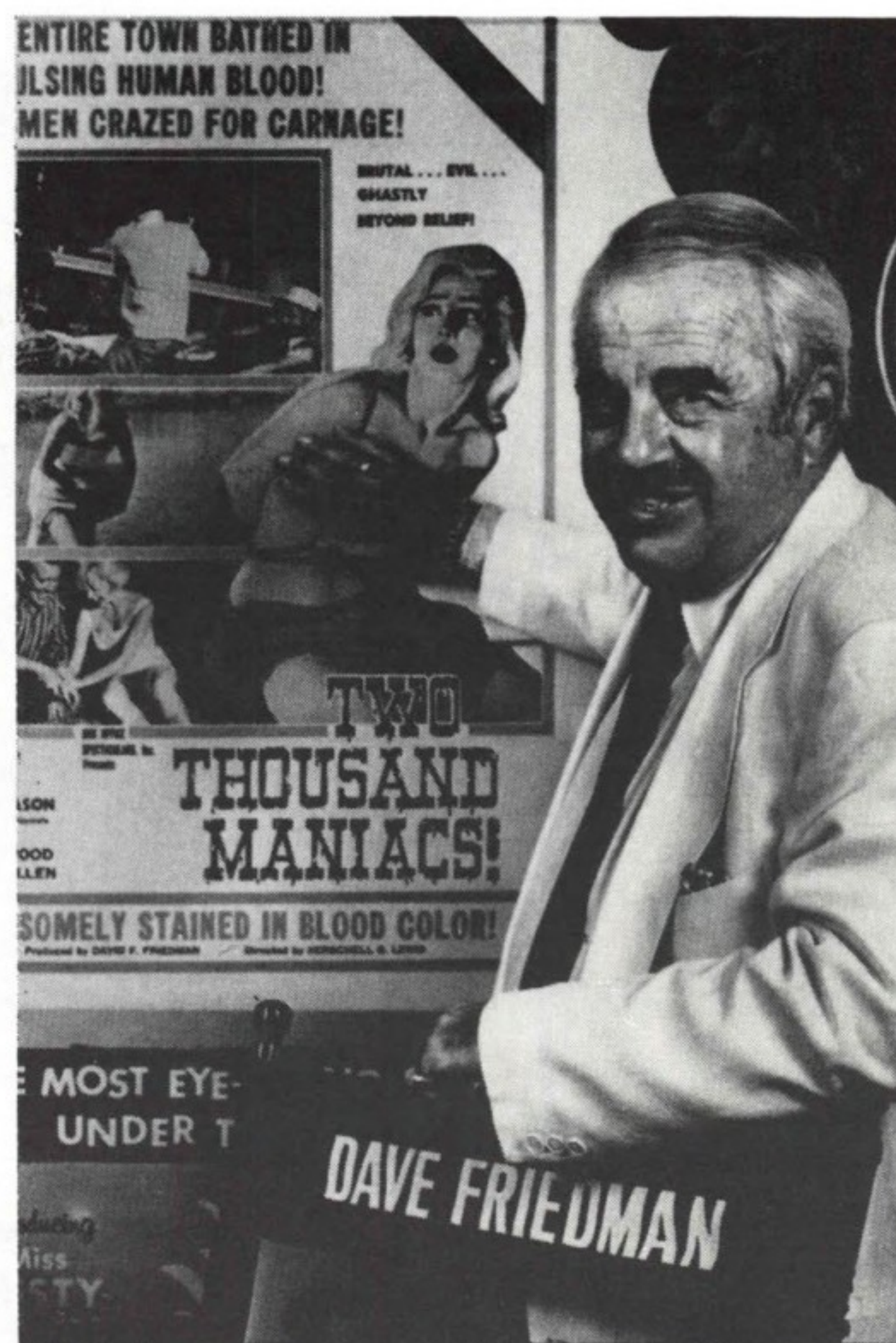
The awestricken reader is availed of an apoplectic avalanche of anecdote and apothegm relating to the bombastic Babb, at the mere mention of whose name Friedman shifts into fervid gear, allocating

alleluias in an *allegro* of alluring alliteration. When Babb stands centerstage in the pages of Friedman's past, *A YOUTH IN BABYLON* allows the reader to peer into the presence of a presence without peer. The portrait reaches its zenith in a gripping and hilarious chapter detailing the weeks when *MOM AND DAD* (1944)—Babb's notorious "birth-of-a-baby" road-show—played at a theater picketed by the Knights of Columbus. Robustly told, scripted (if accurately) by the best writers in Reality's employ, this single chapter would make a more wonderful motion picture than any its participants ever made.

Once Babb surrenders his hold and Friedman is left to examine his other acquaintances—Dwain Esper, Pappy Golden, and other charter members of the group Friedman calls "The Forty Thieves"—the pages weaken and the reader realizes that this volume is autobiographical only in its use of First Person. For a book allegedly based on confession, Friedman plays very close to the vest with his own secrets. This is not to suggest that the "Trash Film King" writes dishonestly, just unforthcomingly. Friedman's readers will learn where and what Friedman likes to eat, that he spends a lot of time driving his car, that he smokes like a riverboat, and that his tongue is as silver as the movie screens he's deflowered with cheap product... but nothing more primary, motivational, or (that word again) confessional. In the final stretch, Friedman makes an allusion or two to infidelity on the road, but it isn't enough; not because our salacious curiosity demands satisfaction, but because Friedman's devotion to starlet Connie Mason was evidently the straw that broke his affiliation with Herschell Gordon Lewis.

It's the Lewis/Friedman association that will make this memoir must-reading for most people, but the two chapters detailing their working relationship ("If Ever a Wiz There Was" and "We Killed 'Em in Peoria") are the most disappointing. The first chapter, about the filming of their early "nudie-cuties," is informative but the prose short-circuits from gaudy Technicolor to monogrammatical monochromatics. The second, documenting their Gore Trilogy, seems little more than an unpolished transcript of a particularly evasive interview. Friedman claims that he never needed a Thesaurus again after partnering with Lewis; these are the only two chapters in this vinyl-bound volume of verbose virtuosity which don't seem to have used one.

Friedman's jargon juggling fumbles the ball on a few occasions. He refers at length (beginning on Page 45) to Babb's late 1960's acquisition *UNCLE TOM'S CABIN* as an Italian feature, deriving pages of fun from parodying the accents on its original

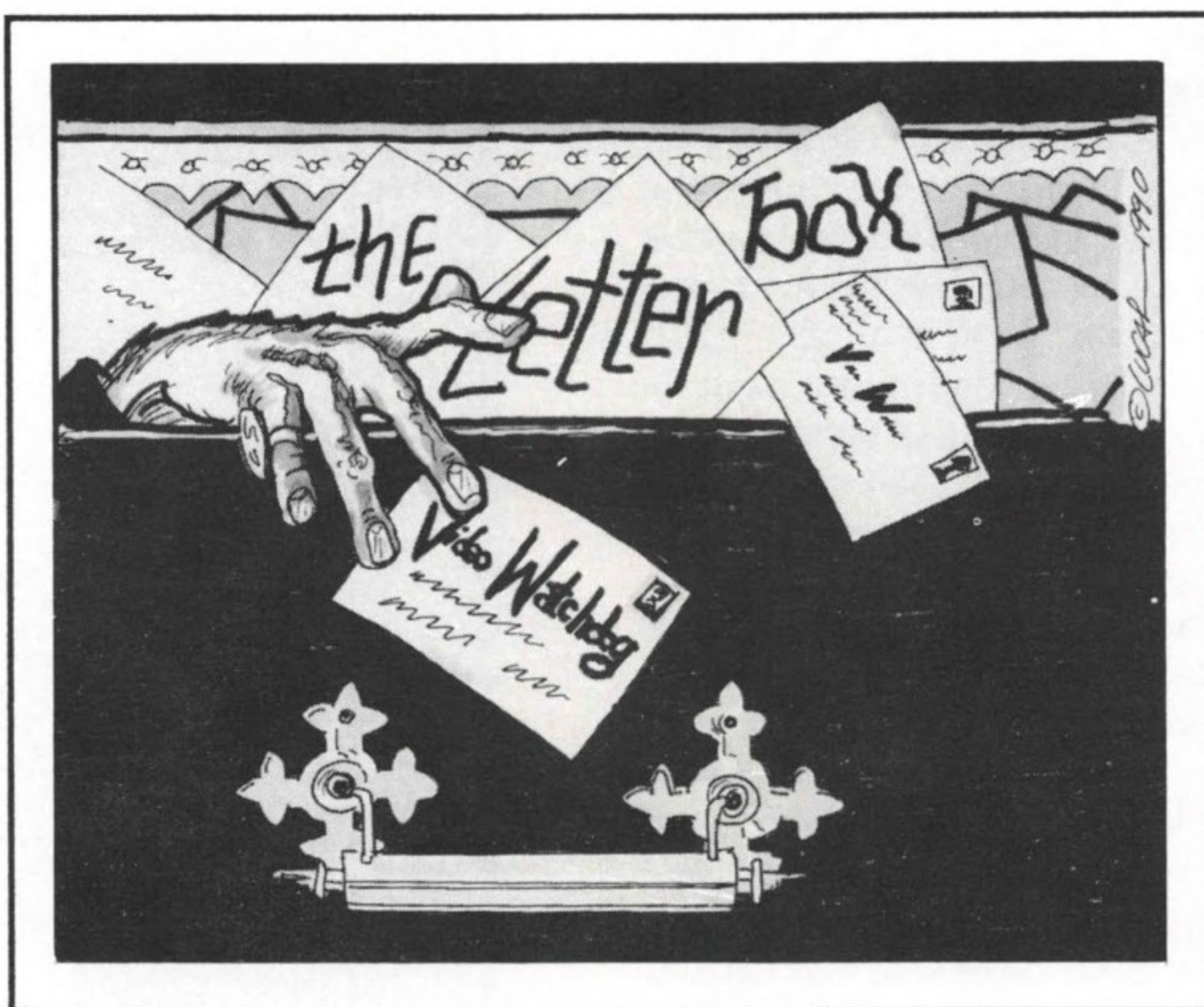


Brother Friedman demonstrates a secret handshake with the Mason of his choice.

soundtrack; it was actually a Spanish/Italian/Yugoslavian co-production, and the dialogue quoted to humorous effect seems dubious considering the Italian aversion to direct sound recording. On Page 51, while discussing actress Ruth Warrick—the star of Hygienic Productions' *ONE TOO MANY*—Friedman dates her work on ABC-TV's *PEYTON PLACE* as "mid-Fifties," a full decade off the mark. Lastly, on Page 340, Friedman claims that neither he or Lewis know the current whereabouts of *BLOOD FEAST*'s Fuad Ramses, though actor Mal Arnold—reportedly now working in real estate—recently made a guest appearance in Donald Farmer's made-for-video feature *VAMPIRE COP*.

A YOUTH IN BABYLON closes with a two-page "trailer" or "carny pitch" for a projected sequel, *KINGS OF BABYLON*, which promises further prurient palaver about Friedman's preeminent participation in the profitable purveyance of eye-popping pulchritude. The world could use a well-written chronicle of the adult film industry, and an honest one would be even more valuable. I hope this raunchy, rollicking raconteur will prove himself the right man to entrust with that task.





The response we've received to our last few issues has been especially gratifying, and we thank our correspondents for their continued accolades and information. Because of my recent extracurricular activities, the stack of mail awaiting my personal reply has gotten completely out-of-hand; if you're among the patient folk represented in that stack, sit tight—if you haven't heard from me yet, you will soon. For future reference, we've learned that letters get answered quickest when accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped POSTCARD.

In answer to the most common question we're asked, there are no plans at this time to reprint VW #2. We still have plenty of "Video Watchdog Informant" buttons to offer our published correspondents, and an aggressive few have managed to collect more than one. Write us with your video discoveries today and help us spread the wealth! The latest recipients are...

RIPLEY'S LEAVE HIM OR NOT?

Mark Kermode's article on the **ALIENS: SPECIAL EDITION** [VW 3:23-27] laserdisc has got me salivating for its release. He reports that hard evidence of a scene wherein Ripley finds Burke co-cooned by the aliens to be elusive. This sent me running for a copy of **ALIENS: THE OFFICIAL MOVIE MAGAZINE** (O'Quinn Studios, 1986). On Page 40, Burke is pictured in all his misery before an indifferent Ripley. Putting trust in a "Making Of" book may be a mistake but, then again, pictures don't lie.

**Jerry Dreiss
Brighton, MA**

Right you are, Jerry! Though the scene was filmed, it was evidently decided by director James Cameron that the footage would not be included in the forthcoming **ALIENS: SPECIAL EDITION** disc because it portrayed Ripley in a cold, unsympathetic light. CBS/FOX still hasn't announced a release date for this disc.

MORE OF THE GARGANTUA

Your capsule review of the Japanese laserdisc of **Fuhrankenshutain tai Barugon** [VW 4:22] states that the disc is identical to AIP's version until the Devilfish finale. Not quite. There is an additional sequence early on, in which Nick Adams is escorted by his female assistant (Kumi Mizuno) to visit a Japanese temple. Also, the Devilfish finale has not been in any version of this film, Japanese or American, until this disc! Japanese fans are seeing this footage for the first time themselves. It was originally filmed specifically for the US market, but AIP apparently passed on it.

**Greg Feret
Chicago, IL 60641**

The long-lost Devil Fish scene from FRANKENSTEIN CONQUERS THE WORLD, restored to Toho Video's Japanese laserdisc of FUHRANKENSHUTAIN TAI BARUGON (1965).





"UNCLE TOM'S CABAÑA" missed being included on TEX AVERY'S SCREWBALL CLASSICS 3 by that much!

UNCLE TED'S MAÑANA

Unfortunately, the mass-market version of MGM/UA's **TEX AVERY'S SCREWBALL CLASSICS 3** [VW 4:17] has substituted "The Flea Circus" for "Uncle Tom's Cabaña." Whether this is due to protests or wussiness on the part of Turner Entertainment is irrelevant; it's a crying shame, and a loss—if not a slap in the face—to serious animation buffs. A look at Goodtimes Video's **CARTOON SCANDALS** [which features other black stereotype toons] should hammer home to anybody with a speck of humanity

that these offensive stereotypes condemn the attitudes of the time much more capably than any amount of angry rhetoric. Past that, these cartoons represent a valid place in the history of the art form. One could make a serious argument that preservation of such pieces serve the same purpose as Holocaust reminders... let's not make the same mistakes again. An extreme comparison perhaps but, dammit, somebody's deciding what I should or should not see and *that pisses me off!!!*

Freeman Williams
Houston, TX 77057

Only a racist or a coward could watch "Uncle Tom's Cabaña" and not see through its stereotypical windowdressing to the immense human warmth underlying its black characters. We were sad to receive this letter because it means that one of Avery's greatest comic masterpieces must await a freer time than our own to stand proudly once again among his other achievements. We'll come a step closer to that time when video companies realize once and for all that animation is a serious art form—not a babysitter that must pass parental inspections.

THE SECRET LIFE OF CRATES

In Douglas Sirk's remake of John Stahl's 1934 **IMITATION OF LIFE**, there is a sequence in which Troy Donahue—acting against type—mercilessly beats and humiliates Susan Kohner, who is trying to run away with him. The scene takes place in one of the numerous cul-de-sacs of the famous "town square" set on the Universal lot in California.

If you look closely in the background of the scene, you'll find some unusual rubbish. Plainly visible are several large, wooden packing crates, each addressed to a fictitious company: "Ryberg Electronics, Los Angeles, CA." Ryberg Electronics, though, *did* exist for about 86 minutes as the company for which Rex Reason worked in Joseph Newman's **THIS ISLAND EARTH**! In that film, the same packing crates can be seen scattered around a laboratory as Reason and his assistant try to piece together the parts [of an "interociter," a communications device] sent to them by alien beings.

At first I thought the trash was just left over from a day's shoot somewhere else on the lot, until I checked the release dates of the films (1959 and 1954, respectively)—five years apart! So why did the studio choose to keep these empty boxes in their prop inventory for all that time?

Tim Onosko
Madison, WI 53703

It's not unusual for practical and reusable props to remain indefinitely in studio storage to keep costs down. But the fact that you noticed and identified the words stencilled on those crates, Tim, is a commendable feat of watchdoggery. Speaking of the secret lives of crates, check out Ted

*Newsom's made-for-video documentary **MONSTERS & MANIACS** (Phoenix Distributors, 6253 Hollywood Blvd. #818, Hollywood CA 90028). During the program, hostess Brinke Stevens freezes a scene from **FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER** to read the stencil on a crate briefly glimpsed in Donald Murphy's lab. The Wardour Street address was that of Hammer Productions, and the reference was intended as a tip of the hat to the studio that made *Frankenstein* commercial again!*

ENDING THE WORLD A LITTLE SOONER

HBO Video's release of the intense thriller **MIRACLE MILE** deletes the final chill of the film! After the end credits of the theatrical version, before the blue MPAA rating seal, there was a long, omi-

nous, air-attack siren on the soundtrack. The effect was incredible.

Joe Badger
Madison, WI 53703

DEATH AND TOXES

THE TOXIC AVENGER showed up on Japanese laserdisc containing a bunch of extra footage, including: extra (brief) nudity during the first sex scene between Slug and his girlfriend; Melvin and his Mom; Toxie calling his Mother on the phone and telling her he's Melvin; and the two blondes are revealed to be alive (the blonde is bald!). One very strange thing: the scenes involving the kid getting his head run-over and the seeing-eye dog that gets shot are shown in negative!

Dan Pydynkowski
Danvers, MA



W

ho should pop up in **SHAG: THE MOVIE** (HBO Video, \$89.95) but Shirley Anne Field—the woefully untalented heroine of **HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM** (1959) and **THESE ARE THE DAMNED** (1961)—in the role of Phoebe Cates' mother! This flame-haired beauty, an actress of legendary inability, was savagely embarrassed by Michael Powell, who cast her as a gratingly incompetent starlet in his classic **PEEPING TOM** (1960, Admit One Video). Guess what? She still looks great, but her entire performance in **SHAG**—surprise, surprise—seems to have been entirely redubbed by another actress! It's nice to see our girl Shirl again, and to know that some things never change...



Jonathan Frid branched out into features with HOUSE OF DARK SHADOWS (1970).

SHEDDING LIGHT ON SHADOWS

After reading Rodney Ross' letter in VW 2:63, I would like to correct an erroneous assumption on his part regarding the release of DARK SHADOWS on MPI Home Video.

It is correct that Volumes 1-8 feature some edited episodes and a couple have been left out entirely. However, *absolutely no Barnabas Collins scenes have been deleted.*

Barnabas did not appear until the second year. Since the show was a daily soap opera, there were

naturally some old storylines still running when Barnabas was introduced. One of these mundane plots was a blackmail story.

As with the syndicated televised reruns of **DARK SHADOWS**, it was decided that the home videos would begin with Barnabas' introduction since, to most viewers, DS *is* Barnabas. In addition, it was decided that the first 8 volumes should be enhanced by trimming away much of the non-Barnabas material left over from earlier episodes. Despite Mr. Ross' claim, there was never a scene depicting Barnabas' destruction of the lab.

If strong sales continue for the tapes, a collector's series will eventually be issued featuring the pre-Barnabas episodes.

Jim Pierson
Producer/Consultant
MPI Home Video
Oak Forest, IL 60452

Mr. Pierson's letter is printed at his request and has been slightly abbreviated for publication. Looking ahead, if and when the "collector's series" of first series episodes appears, MPI will face the problem of whether or not to remove all of the previously issued Barnabas material from the re-edited second year episodes. If they do, the early Barnabas episodes will exist on tape only in scattershot form, forcing viewers to toggle back and forth between Volumes 1-8 and the collector's series. If MPI take the easiest (and probably best) route and leave these episodes intact, DS fans will have spent \$19.95 per tape—a total of \$160.00!—for eight volumes of obsolete material. We look forward to seeing how this situation is resolved.

DON'T TAPE TO TRADE, LEARN A TRADE

Here's a true story. A good friend of mine in Northern California is a partner in a small comic book shop, a situation allowing him to watch tapes all day while "working." He had a special tape room added to his home, just to house his collection in a properly controlled environment. This dedicated fellow was hopelessly addicted to film collecting and cataloguing, working purely on a trader-to-trader basis. Anyway, two short years ago, this happy tapehead copied a few of the wrong films for the wrong guy, namely **FANTASIA** and **SNOW WHITE** for a semi-retired FBI

agent who was really working a copyright sting. Sure enough, the Feds came and confiscated all of my friend's equipment and tapes, and a judge handed down an injunction barring him from any kind of video trading until the case was settled in court, which was going to take at least a year to even get started!

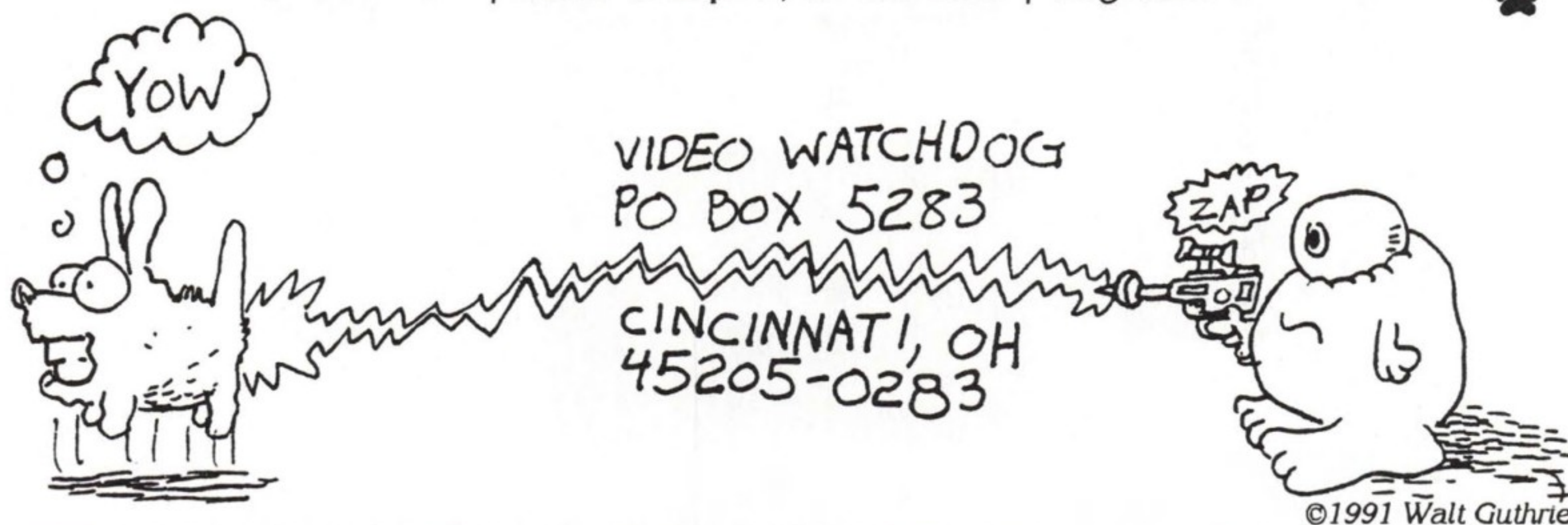
So, while waiting for the legal

system to have its way, our hero began painting to pass the time. Amazingly, sixteen months later, he produced over 200 paintings and had two successful local shows, selling over a quarter of his output. Not surprisingly, his case was ultimately thrown out of court and all of his stuff, tapes and all, was returned. But he didn't even bother to unpack, for that extra

room was now his studio and he'd learned that he dug being a creator more than a collector. So, you see, being investigated by the FBI can be a blessing in disguise!

Jeff Conner
Scream/Press
Los Angeles, CA 90048

Alas, I decided to create a video magazine.



VW #3 ERRATA

- 7 François Truffaut wouldn't have recognized Barbara Poe as Barbara Steele, the star of Fellini's *8½*, because the Mrs. Poe he would've met in 1963 was screenwriter James Poe's *first* wife, also named Barbara!

VW #4 ERRATA

- 10 **GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH** was filmed in the 1.66:1 aspect ratio, not 1.85:1 as reported.
- 11 **PREPPY SCHOOL GIRLS** has also aired on cable under the title **BOARDING SCHOOL. FANNY HILL** (aka Magnum Video's **SEX, LIES, AND RENAISSANCE**) was previously released by MGM/UA Home Video.
- 13 Sinister Cinema's **ATLAS** is cropped from its original "Vistascope" framing. Magnum Video's **CALIGULA REINCAR-**

NATED AS NERO: The tape is letterboxed, but not for maximum spectacle; the ratio falls shy of its 70mm origins. Our capsule review, which contained contradictory sentences, was subject to one of those "word processing errors." The film's original title was **Nerone e Poppea** ("Nero & Poppea"), and it was filmed back-to-back with **Caligola e Messalina** (which Mattei directed under the pseudonym "Anthony Pass").

- 18 MGM/UA's laserdisc of Rouben Mamoulian's restored **DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE** is reportedly struck from inferior elements and does not represent the superior Turner Entertainment print aired a few years ago on LA's late and lamented Z Channel.

- 19 **GREMLINS** was filmed in the 1.66:1 aspect ratio, not 1.85:1 as reported. The laserdisc is matted at top and bottom to

obstruct ephemera (boom mikes, effects cables, etc.) from view.

- 58 **PETULIA** was released by Warner Home Video, not Paramount as reported.

VW #5 ERRATA

- 16 The 2m of additional footage in HBO/Image Entertainment's laserdisc of **CURSE OF THE CRIMSON ALTAR** does not occur during the party scene, but during a jiggly flogging in the Black Mass sequence at the beginning of the film. We neglected to note that Kendall Schmidt's newsynthesizer score disappears entirely from the film's fiery climax, making the inferno seem dull, stagey and, above all, cheap.

[Thanks to Joe Dante, David Del Valle, Marc Edward Heuck, Carl Morano and Raymond Scholer for bringing some of this to our attention.]



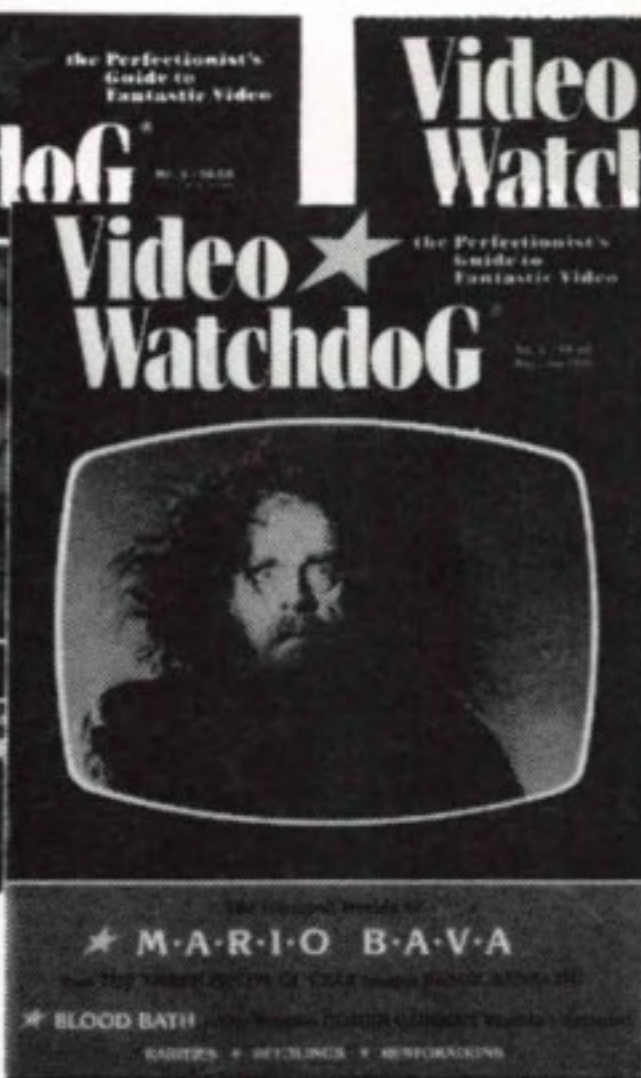
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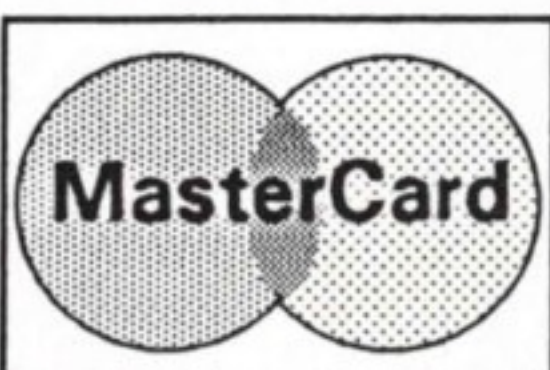
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